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P-Noy: I'm not shocked

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...as litany of corruption in AFP is discovered

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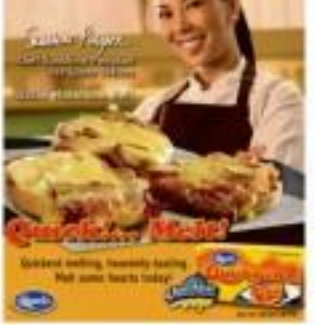

Egypt military seeks end to demos

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Metro Manila	Mostly Cloudy	Cloudy with Rain
Baguio	Mostly Cloudy	Cloudy with Rain
Tuguegarao	Mostly Cloudy	Cloudy with Rain
Laoag	Mostly Cloudy	Cloudy with Rain
Iloilo	Mostly Cloudy	Cloudy with Rain
Cebu	Mostly Cloudy	Cloudy with Rain
Tacloban	Mostly Cloudy	Cloudy with Rain
Legazpi	Mostly Cloudy	Cloudy with Rain
Zamboanga	Mostly Cloudy	Cloudy with Rain
Davao	Mostly Cloudy	Cloudy with Rain

2/2 P		
2 PM	25	19
5 PM	12	2
8 PM	20	10

QUARTERLY			
11 AM	4	8	1
4 PM	5	7	5
7 PM	6	2	7

4 DIGIT 2/2 P	
6	3 4 1

MEGALOTTO 6/45	
25	26 27 33 34 38
P4,500,000.00	

6/55 GRAND LOTTO	
5	7 18 19 38 55
P57,557,620.80	

LOTTO TIMES from ONLOTTO, sent to MAIL-TO Officers

Witnesses fear for their lives

Ethics probe of Singson starts

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Cynthia D. Balana

THE HOUSE ethics committee will start an inquiry into whether Ilocos Sur Rep. Reynaldo Singson can still discharge his duties as a congressman after he pleaded guilty to drug-trafficking charges in a Hong Kong court last Monday.

"Somebody made a motion yesterday which was seconded so I guess that is already carried," said Lanao del Norte Rep. Ma. Elisaguen Magsaysay yesterday.

She said the motion was approved in a committee meeting yesterday after Singson was quoted in news reports as saying that he had an intention of resigning as a member of the House of Representatives.

Magsaysay said the committee members believed the investigation should commence even while the drug case against Singson is still being heard in a Hong Kong court.

House Speaker Feliciano Belmonte told reporters that the ethics committee would meet on Feb. 15 to screen all the documents pertaining to the drug-trafficking case of Singson.

But he insisted that House members should give the 42-year-old congressman "due process," pointing out that the ethics committee had already taken cognizance of the case and was starting to address the demand of some House members for Singson to be expelled.

"We are not asking him to resign or anything like that. I'm asking that due process be followed and I don't think that people will be disappointed," Belmonte said.

Belmonte said Singson's court case should be resolved in the next few weeks and the ethics committee should be able to complete its work shortly after the judge hands down his ruling.

Singson was not immediately interviewed by the Hong Kong District Court pending testimony on whether he planned on executing the cocaine or sharing it with others, a factor that could influence the length of his sentence.

Singson is hoping to convince the court that the cocaine found in his possession last July was for his personal use and for sale so he would be handed down the lesser penalty of deportation.

He spent last Monday's hearing trying to prove that he had been a cocaine user since 2004.

The legislator was arrested at the Hong Kong International airport on July 13, 2010. He admitted to bringing 6.67 grams of cocaine and two tablets of the narcotic Mexatamine into the city. The cocaine was hidden in his underpants. The total value of the cocaine was about $1,000.

Under Hong Kong law, the mere act of bringing drugs in the territory is defined as trafficking, regardless of whether the drugs are intended for personal use or for sale or distribution.

Seek protection from car theft ring

By Alexis Pepa

TWO WITNESSES to the murder of car dealer Emerson Lozano are probably in danger from the remnants of the notorious Dominguez car theft syndicate, according to the father of the victim.

Lawyer Oliver Lozano said he has memorized a plot to kill Rhodel Mendiola and the divorced Porsches to prevent them from testifying against Raymond Dominguez, the alleged leader of the gang.

According to Lozano, Mendiola and Porsches had sent handwritten notes to Conrad Lozano (police authorities in Central Luzon last Jan. 30 asking to be transferred immediately to the government's Witness Protection Program.

In their letter, Mendiola and Nicolas said they were convinced other members of the criminal group were out to kill them to prevent their testifying against Dominguez, who is now in police custody and is under preliminary investigation, according to Lozano.

The lawyer said he had asked the Guardians Brotherhood, the fraternity of soldiers that he serves as legal counsel, to verify the threat and they have found it to be true.

Lozano said he had asked the Guardians to "neutralize" the plot to kill the two witnesses.

The lawyer told reporters he was going to the Justice department later yesterday to file an theft and murder charges against Dominguez.

He also said he would request the Anti-Money Laundering Council to freeze Dominguez's bank accounts.

The younger Lozano was abducted on Jan. 12. His shattered body was found in Pinac, Pampanga two days later. The body of Rolando Lozano, Emerson's brother, was found in La Paz, Tarlac on Jan. 15.

The Philippine National Police, meanwhile, has offered a P100,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of the alleged gunmen in the murder of Lozano and another car dealer, Ernesto Evangelista.

Evangelista was reported missing in Quezon City on Jan. 13. His burnt body was found in Cabanatuan City the next day.

Chief Supt. Benito Rolaposa, the head of the Special Investigation Task Group-Lozano, has identified the gunmen as Rolando Talbon alias "Rolly."

Splinter party formed out of Lakas-Kampi

IT WAS THE single biggest party in the country when they merged less than two years ago.

But with their leader out of Malacañang, the ranks of Lakas-Kampi Christian Muslim Democrats have been decimated further with half of the remaining members forming a break-away group.

Called the National Union Party (NUP), it is composed mostly of original members of Kampi except for Isabela, Pampanga Rep. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who decided to stay on with Lakas-Kampi as its chair.

Lakas-Kampi deputy executive director Jerry Bogacon told reporters that Arroyo decided to stick it out with Lakas-Kampi, claiming that she nurtured it for the last 12 years. (She was under the Lakas-CMD-Kampi alliance for two years.)

A source from the NUP admitted to papers with the Commission on Elections last week, said that the party was formed with 20 core members from Lakas-Kampi and backed up by 16 lawmakers and local government officials from other parties. The NUP chair is Cebu Rep. Pablo Garcia and its president is Nueva Ecija Rep. Rodolfo Antonino.

Bill Luthercamper.fr

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Professor of Law, University of the Philippines
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Chairman, Department of Civil Law, Philippine Judicial Academy

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3 insiders on Comelec shortlist

WikiLeaks bares uranium smuggling in PH

By Jerry E. Esplanada

MANILA, Philippines – An alleged uranium smuggling incident involving uranium-ore radioactive material used in the production of nuclear power—took place in the Philippines in 2007, according to a cable from the US Embassy in London that was released by the WikiLeaks online whistleblowers.

Quoting an unidentified source, the unclassified embassy memo said the uranium was "recently belonged to the US."

The same embassy source had allegedly "worked with divers in the Philippine provinces[sic] and was recently contacted by them with information that they had found five to six uranium bricks in an underwater wreck."

In the Nov. 21, 2007 cable to the US State Department, then US Ambassador to the United Kingdom Robert H. Tuttle did not disclose the location of the wreck.

But Tuttle said the informant's remarks had "unprovenlike desire to sell the bricks for profit."

The same embassy source had earlier informed the US Central Intelligence Agency about the "possible nuclear smuggling incident," but "no one had not received a response" until then.

In the cable, the source described as "unknown" the supplier, transport status and the intended destination of the alleged nuclear materials.

On the mission's assessment of the likelihood that appropriate authorities would secure the materials, Tuttle said "UK and Philippine authorities have not yet been notified."

Tuttle attached "nine photos of the substances in question" to the embassy cable.

Contacted for comment, the US Embassy in Manila through its spokesperson, Rebecca Thompson, said "the US government does not comment on materials, including classified documents, which may have been leaked."

"We cannot speak to the authenticity of any such documents provided to the press," Thompson said.

Assistant Secretary J. Eduardo Malaya, spokesperson of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and DFA officials "generally do not comment on the contents of another government's internal communications."

The release of the WikiLeaks files comes on a crucial time for Philippine-US relations as the Visiting Forces Agreement, which governs the conduct of US forces in the country, is being reviewed by Malacañang.

Private Bayan Jr., secretary general of the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan described as "alarming" the WikiLeaks report.

"The memo raises a lot of questions on why there would be uranium bricks in Philippine territory. We are a country that does not allow nuclear weapons, nor do any agents stay nuclear powered plant. The nuclear materials are believed to be from the US," stated Bayan.

Bayan said he could "only think of a few American entities that are nuclear-capable. These are US troops. The question is, what are the US forces doing with nuclear material in our country?"

"Was there a US ship Our task, and is this, what's being described as the underwater wreck? Was that ship nuclear powered?" he asked.

P-Noy: I'm no longer shocked at AFP scandal

From page A1

"The idea there is to ensure that the maximum resources are brought down to the field where they are needed most," he said.

The President also said the government had offered Mendoza inclusion in the Witness Protection Program (WPP).

He said that with the considerable number of cases of corruption, he had ordered the Presidential Management Staff to consolidate all the information and to prepare a timeline for the Department of Justice to tackle.

Communications Secretary Ricky Carandang said that Malacañang received Mendoza's request for security on Monday and that security arrangements were formalized on Tuesday when she testified before the House committee on justice. She is under the complex Sanggunian kabataan since prosecutors and former AFP comptroller Carlos Garcia.

Carandang told reporters in Manila that Malacañang was monitoring the testimonies of ex-raid Lt. Lenido Lim in the House, but also noted Lt. Col. George Rabusa at the Senate.

"We will decide the course of action once the stories are completed," he said.

Immunity, protection

Rabusa, who served as military budget officer from 2000 to 2003, yesterday asked the Department of Justice (DOJ) to grant him immunity from suit.

He made the move two days after retired AFP chief of staff Angelo Reyes charged him with graft following his previous revelations on the purported "pabaon" (send-off money) for his former bosses in the military.

Rabusa also applied for inclusion in the WPP after receiving threats on his life, Justice Secretary Leila de Lima said in a news briefing.

Aside from prosecution, he was asking for immunity because he admitted that he also benefited from the irregularities during his stint in the military," De Lima said.

"Since he implicated previous chiefs of staff, this is an issue matter. This is something serious, as in the case of Heidi Mendoza," she said.

De Lima said that Rabusa submitted an affidavit in support of his application to the DOJ and that he promised to file a "more extensive and exhaustive affidavit" detailing his knowledge of graft and corruption in the military and Garcia's alleged ill-gotten wealth.

She said Rabusa's second session statement may serve as a compliance affidavit that could be used as basis for the DOJ to conduct a preliminary investigation against Reyes and other former AFP chiefs of staff now in Congress and Deputy Ombudsman Emilio Gonzalez III.

"He said he would present documents and possibly a new substantive witness. The lawyer said the affidavit will be sufficient for preliminary investigation," she said.

Participant who squealed

In his testimony before the Senate blue ribbon committee last week, Rabusa claimed that the three former AFP chiefs of staff got millions of pesos in kickbacks from 42 pesos in start-up funds and send-off gifts.

According to De Lima, Rabusa told her that he would reveal more information on the irregular use of military funds as the resumption of his testimony at the Senate today.

"His testimony can stand as evidence by itself. It's just a question of credibility—if the court will believe the credibility of this person and the credibility of his story," she said.

De Lima said that because he had admitted to direct involvement in the offense, Rabusa could be granted immunity from lawsuits as a whistleblower.

She said a whistle-blower was different from an ordinary witness because the former "is right there in the middle of things, and even participates."

Being a "participant who squealed," a whistle-blower is very important in unveiling the significant details of irregularities committed, De Lima said.

"That's why the legal system provides for immunity in certain cases. But of course there are considerations and elements that need to be evaluated. It's also not applicable when he become a) state witness," she said, adding:

"So long as he is not the most guilty, his testimony can be corroborated to its essential points, and 2) is essential for conviction of those most guilty, then he's qualified ... for immunity."

Closed-door meeting

De Lima also said Rabusa's consultation was "one classic example of a case where we need to lift [the] protection of immunity."

Accompanied by his lawyers and security escorts, Rabusa met with WPP acting director Martin Moller before meeting with De Lima behind closed doors.

He declined to speak with reporters, saying he was not feeling well. He said had difficulty speaking.

De Lima said Rabusa and his lawyer Ferdi Mahaya disclosed the threats they had been receiving on their mobile phones.

One of the purported text messages sent to Mahaya said what was more important to him—popularity or his family.

De Lima said she would ask Interpol for the Philippines to issue a statement condemning the purported harassment of Mahaya.

"Lawyers are just lawyers. Pity are they involving the lawyers in these things? Why are they threatening the lawyer?" she said.

De Lima said the meeting with Rabusa, De Lima said, he clearly looked anxious "although he tried to show a brave front."

"His aim seems that he's afraid, especially for his family. The only thing that keeps him strong is the thought of doing something for the good of future generations," De Lima said.

Asked to describe her meeting with Rabusa, she replied: "I could feel his sincerity and his credibility." With a report from Christine O. Avenido

'Let ax fall'

THE DEPARTMENT of National Defense (DND) is leading the pressure to take immediate action on the reported diversion of funds to create a slush fund for military bases.

A special DND fact-finding panel formed last week will hold a public hearing on Friday about the workings of the once powerful military comptroller's office before it was disbanded in 2005.

"It really affects the whole institution," DND spokesperson Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro told reporters, referring to the purported slush fund.

"Among government agencies, the DND and the [AFP] have proposed upon themselves the most stringent measures in the category. That is why the issue is very important to us. It has to be resolved. The truth should come out," he said.

Bacarro said Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin had vowed that "if there are offenses are going to be prosecuted relentlessly, and nobody is going to be spared. Let the ax fall where it will fall."

"What's important is to get to the bottom of this and ferret out the individuals who committed these crimes and offenses, Bacarro said.

"It is very unfair to come up with powerful accusations and involving people who don't even know about this. It's very unfair. There are many people in the [AFP] and the [DND] who are now trying to mind the narrow and straight path. That is why we want to get to the bottom of this," he said.

Why Heidi came out with all guns blazing with help of Ateneo group

From page A1

ance of those whom Mendoza had crossbed before she outlined to tell the country that there were efforts to pin down Garcia.

Her elder sister said Mendoza's decision to expose corruption in the military was simply living up to the final words of their father.

"Before our father died, the last message that he left to us was: 'Huwag kayong kukuha ng anuman na galing sa taong Magtiis sa kahirapan at magtipid na lang kayo' and anything that came from theft, from poverty and whatever you have[,]" said Mendoza's sister, Gigi de Castro.

"An exercise and any form of harassment can break her until she is married to things we can't image her to [see]," she said in a phone interview on Wednesday from the nearby city of Tagaytay in Quezon province.

Their father, Agapito "Lito" Sr., a retired policeman, died in 1983 from a heart ailment and diabetes.

Mendoza, who led a team that audited military transactions between 2004 and 2006, testified in the plunder case against Garcia. She detailed a transaction involving a P500-million military deal, of which P50 million was channeled for the Presidential campaign of then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Mendoza's testimony had been debunked by military personnel, who testified that the retired brigadier general was able to reconcile the discrepancy that she audited found.

It was Mendoza who made up her mind to come out in the open, but she was not alone when she made that difficult choice, Marcelo said.

Ateneo support group

Marcelo said Mendoza's husband, a group of friends from Ateneo de Manila University that included Fr. Bob Ships, and members of a support community organization were with Mendoza when she was weighing the pros and cons of speaking publicly.

The meeting took place at the Ateneo School of Government in Makati City last month.

During the meeting, Mendoza said he had been regularly in touch with Mendoza. He said Mendoza had been giving him words of support because he was speaking out against the plea bargain deal and in a result became a target of criticism.

Scapegoat

Some time last month, Mendoza called Mendoza up to relay what she was told—that there was talk that she would be among those to be blamed for the retail-robbery against Garcia.

Marcelo said former Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio were the officer who would be blamed for the whole case. "She told me, 'what will happen? The public would not know the truth,'" Marcelo said.

Losing AOB job

Mendoza told Mendoza that she would have to decide for herself, since she would have a very good job at the Asian Development Bank if she speaks up.

But Mendoza told Marcelo that she was having difficulty sleeping over the matter and then called for a meeting with friends.

At the meeting, the group talked about the risks of speaking out against the prosecutors' stand that the case against Garcia was weak. The group also told her that coming out publicly was a decision that was her's to make alone.

Marcelo said he had pointed out that one of the witnesses in the plunder case against deposed President Joseph Estrada continued to have a good even 20 years after the case. He said he told that she would be among those to be blamed for the retail-robbery against Garcia.

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Talk with husband

Mendoza then took her husband aside and then talked. Afterwards, she came back to the group and said she would speak up. She asked the group to help her with advice, with legal counsel and with security.

She also gave the go-signal for the airing of the first TV interview that he gave. She had agreed in the interview on the condition that it would not air until she says so.

Clue proud of Heidi

All of Lito's seven children—5 girls and 2 boys—hail from Tayabas as the days of the mystical Mount Banahaw. Mendoza is the second to the youngest.

"Our father died with an unblemished record as a policeman. Mahilig magsulat [he] against graft and corruption matters our father's legacy. His rebels clue is proud of Heidi," De Castro said.

Antony Giordano, ex-MSF news correspondent and longtime resident of Tayabas, remembered the elder Lito as a member of the local police force.

"He is one fine example of an honest cop," Giordano said. No wonder Heidi is now showing signs of the demeanor of her late father."

Lack of sleep

De Castro said she was able to talk with her younger sister on Tuesday evening.

"She still gets her 3 hours of sleep, tension and all," she said, her voice trembling.

"She was very apologetic when she told me that all her family members should avoid making phone calls to her. That we should be connected with sensitive text messages but not to others. She's really sorry that our lives will all be affected because of her current situation. But we all understand her," De Castro added.

De Castro said, however, that she encouraged Mendoza to stay her battle against influential and unmoved military officials for the safety of her own family but the advice was ignored.

Lots of blessings

De Castro commented her sister's response to her plea: "I have already counted lots of blessings from the Lord. I could not survive back on that little task that He assigned to me. I'm just His instrument to unfold His truth. What I have with me are documents, all products of my faithful investigation as a public servant."

She said her sister, whom she described as courageous, intelligent and principled, reminded her that she was just following their father's last message to his children.

De Castro said her sister would not accept any form of gifts, not even fruits or grandiose money, and had been refurbished her family's leaking roof, especially to government officials with graft cases.

Vulnerabilities

Mendoza graduated valedictorian in her high school class in a private school in Tayabas and obtained her college degree at Colegio de Santa Rosa in Lucena City.

She left Tayabas after her graduation in the early 1980s and immediately worked at the Commission on Audit in the national government.

She finished a college degree at a Manila university. They have three children, all college students, according to her sister.

Tayabas Vice Mayor Nonoy de Dios said Mendoza was often invited as a guest speaker at graduation rites in the town's schools. He recalled that the last time he heard her give a graduation message was when she urged the graduating class to be honest in all their dealings in life.

Tayabas Councilor Ernesto Jimenez of Tayabas would adopt a resolution declaring to support for Mendoza.

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Miriam to brother ex-chief of staff Benjamin Defensor: Just tell truth

From page A1

Tuesday, Mendoza said that of the amount, P100 million and P50 million were deposited in two branches of United Coconut Planters Bank, or Unicob, on Quezon Ave. in Quezon City.

Mendoza said the P130-million deposit with UCPB Alabang was arrested by two deposit slips, but the P50-million deposit allegedly with UCPB Barkadilan was not.

She said AFP officials had told her that the P50 million was a "pabaon" for an officer who was retiring or who retired when the Nov. 28, 2002, transaction was made.

The justice committee chaired by Iloilo Rep. Niel Tupas Jr. backed Mendoza's claim that the officer who retired on that date was Defensor.

"I don't know about that transaction," the retired general told the Inquirer, referring to a "retiring" P50-million fund that he was supposed to have received as "pabaon" (send-off gift) on his retirement. "I deny receiving any 'pamitdong' [send-some money]. I deny getting any 'pabaon' during my term."

Defensor said he had only learned about the purported slush fund for the military from from news reports that came out even before the government started to build the plunder case against Carlos Garcia, as its eventual chief of the AFP.

Asked if he had ordered an inquiry into the money, Defensor said he served as AFP chief of staff for less than three months—from Sept. 10 to Nov. 28, 2002. "I can't remember any transaction during that short period," he said.

Name them

"That's correct. I retired on that date," Defensor said yesterday. "There was a change of command on Nov. 28, 2002, and I retired. I was relieved by Gen. Benjamin Santiago. But I did not get any amount after that."

Defensor, who was absent at the committee hearing on Tuesday, said Mendoza should name the AFP officials who told her that the retiring brid were given an "pabaon" that general afterhad retired because he was the only one who did so during that period.

"If that is what she said, that's hearsay," he said.

Tupas yesterday said Defensor should make sure he would attend the next hearing on he could make things clear.

"We will send an invitation to General Defensor to attend the hearing next week," Tupas said, adding that the committee is resuming what was once if Defensor had received the invitation for the Tuesday hearing.

Joint inquiry

In a press conference, House Minority Floor Leader Erico Aquino called for a joint inquiry with the Senate into irregularities in the AFP so that the two chambers of Congress would come up with one report and set of recommendations.

Citizens' City Rep. Winston Castelo and Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño expressed support for the proposed investigation.

"The AFP is a constitutional organization," Castelo said. "The evils and of corruption found right at the top of the hierarchy will eventually cascade down to the lowest echelon down to the line."

Casiño said that based on the testimonies of Mendoza at the House and that of George Rabusa, a former military budget officer, at the Senate, the AFP "is not an old boys' club but a fiefdom."

Senator Santiago said evidence was necessary to prove that her brother had accepted the purported "pabaon."

'Just tell the truth'

"Let me say that allegation is not evidence. If we hear anything like this, we should ask if this is backed by evidence. Now if there is evidence, then this should be looked into," she said.

Santiago said she had no spoken with her brother on the case, but would advise him to divulge everything he knows about military corruption if summoned to an inquiry.

"I'll tell him, just tell the truth. If you did it, admit it. There's nothing we can do. Otherwise, my reputation will be on the line. If you did not do it, defend yourself. You're capable because you're a PMA [Philippine Military Academy] graduate. Think of ways to back your statement that you did not receive anything because the presumption is always innocence," she said.

Antolingo said that if Defensor were summoned to the Senate, she would indeed be heard.

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Antolingo said that if Defensor were summoned to the Senate, she would indeed be heard.

"I'm not going to defend him. He should be treated like all other AFP chiefs of staff are being treated," she said.

In fact, the Senate blue ribbon committee had been looking into the controversial plea bargain between the Office of the Ombudsman and ex-comptroller Garcia, will summon Defensor in connection with the existing P50 million.

Monday hearing

The committee chair, Sen. Teofisto Guingona III, told reporters that Defensor, along with other retired AFP chiefs of staff, would be invited to attend the hearing next Monday.

For today's hearing that is to start at 9 a.m., Guingona said only Dionisio Santiago had confirmed attendance. He predecessors Diomedio Villanueva and Roy Cimatu had been contacted but not yet to reply.

But Cimatu, now a special envoy of President Aquino, has to wait for the council in Egypt to close over before he can notify on what he knows about the purported AFP chiefs fund.

In an interview yesterday in Bilbao, Laguna, Mr. Aquino told reporters that he needed Cimatu, the chair of the Middle East Peninsulas Committee, to first ensure the safety of the 6,000 Filipinos in Egypt before addressing the "pabaon" allegations.

Reprieve for Cimatu

"As soon as possible, I want him to finish his function in Egypt," the President said, adding that he still has to speak with Cimatu personally.

"General Cimatu is presently still in Afghanistan. He's on his way to Egypt. He was in Afghanistan to assess the response of overseas Filipino workers for the evacuation of Filipinos [from] in Afghanistan," Mr. Aquino said.

Bulusan claimed at a Senate hearing last week that Villanueva and Cimatu each received P50 million as "send-off" fund soon after they took office.

He also claimed that former AFP Chief of Staff Angelo Reyes got a P50-million "pabaon"—on top of a monthly take of P5 million—upon retirement in 2002. With reports from Christine O. Esguerra and Norman Bordadora

CHOOSING LIFE, REJECTING THE RH BILL

(A Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines)

Our Filipino Brothers and Sisters:

The State values the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for human rights (Art. II, Section 11). The State recognizes the sanctity of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution. It shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception (Art. II, Section 12).

Background

We begin by citing the Philippine Constitution. We do so because we intend to write you on the basis of the fundamental ideals and aspirations of the Filipino people and not on the basis of specifically Catholic religious teachings.

We are at a crossroads as a nation. Before us are several versions of a proposed bill, the Reproductive Health bill or sanitized as a Responsible Parenthood bill. This proposed bill in all its versions calls us to make a moral choice: to choose life or to choose death.

At the outset we thank the government for affording us an opportunity to express our views in frankly dialogue. Sadly our dialogue has simply revealed how far apart our respective positions are. Therefore, instead of building false hopes, we wish at the present time to draw up clearly what we object to and what we stand for.

Moral Choices at the Crossroads – at EDSA I and Now

Twenty-five years ago in 1986 we Catholic Bishops made a prophetic moral judgment on political leadership. With this prophetic declaration we believe that we sometimes significantly helped open the door for EDSA I and a window of political integrity.

Today we come to a new national crossroads and we now have to make a similar moral choice. Our President called this country with the election cry, 'Kung walang corrupt walang mahirap.' "As religious leaders we believe that there is a greater form of corruption, namely, moral corruption which is sadly the root of all corruption. On the present issue, it would be morally corrupt to disregard the moral implications of this RH bill.

This is our unanimous collective moral judgment. We strongly reject the RH bill.

Commonly Shared Human and Cultural Values – Two Fundamental Principles

Far from being simply a Catholic issue, the RH bill is a major attack on authentic human values and on Filipino cultural values regarding human life that all of us have cherished since time immemorial.

Simply stated the RH Bill does not respect moral sense that is central to Filipino culture. It is the product of the spirit of this world, a secularist, materialistic spirit that considers morality as a set of teachings from which one can choose, according to the spirit of the age. Some it accepts, others it does not accept. Unfortunately, we see the subtle spread of this post-modern spirit in our own Filipino society.

Our position stands firmly on two of the core principles commonly shared by all who believe in God:

(1) Human life is the most sacred physical gift with which God, the author of life, endows a human being. Placing artificial obstacles to prevent human life from being formed and being born most certainly contradicts this fundamental truth of human life. In the light of the widespread influence of the post-modern spirit in our world, we consider this position as nothing less than prophetic. As religious leaders we must proclaim this truth fearlessly in season and out of season.

(2) It is parents, cooperating with God, who bring children into the world. It is also they who have the primary inalienable right and responsibility to nurture them, care for them, and educate them that they might grow as mature persons according to the will of the Creator.

What We Specifically Object to in the RH Bill

Advocates contend that the RH bill promotes reproductive health. The RH Bill certainly does not. It does not protect the health of the sacred human life that is being formed or born. The very name "contraceptive" already reveals the anti-life nature of the means that the RH bill promotes. These artificial means are fatal to human life, either preventing it from fruition or actually destroying it. Moreover, scientists have known for a long time that contraceptives may cause cancer. Contraceptives are hazardous to a woman's health.

Advocates also say that the RH bill will reduce abortion rates. But many scientific analysts themselves wonder why prevalent contraceptive use sometimes raises the abortion rate. In truth, contraceptives provide a false sense of security that takes away the inhibition to sexual activity. Scientists have noted numerous cases of contraceptive failure. Abortion is resorted to...an act that all religious traditions would judge as sinful. "Safe sex" to diminish abortion rate is false propaganda.

Advocates moreover say that the RH bill will prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. This goes against the grain of many available scientific data. In some countries where condom use is prevalent, HIV/ AIDS continues to spread. Condoms promote a false security that strongly entices individuals towards increased sexual activity, increasing likewise the incidence of HIV/AIDS. "Safe sex" to prevent HIV /AIDS is false propaganda.

Advocates also assert that the RH Bill empowers women with ownership of their own bodies. This is in line with the post-modern spirit declaring that women have power over their own bodies without the dictation of any religion. How misguided this so-called "new truth" is! For, indeed, as created by God our bodies are given to us to keep and nourish. We are stewards of our own bodies and we must follow God's will on this matter according to an informed and right conscience. Such a conscience must certainly be enlightened and guided by religious and moral teachings provided by various religious and cultural traditions regarding the fundamental dignity and worth of human life.

Advocates also say that the RH bill is necessary to stop overpopulation and to escape from poverty. Our own government statistical office has concluded that there is no overpopulation in the Philippines but only the over-concentration of population in a number of urban centers. Despite other findings to the contrary, we must also consider the findings of a significant group of renowned economic scholars, including economic Nobel laureates, who have found no direct correlation between population and poverty. In fact, many Filipino scholars have concluded that population is not the cause of our poverty. The causes of our poverty are: flawed philosophies of development, misguided economic policies; greed; corruption; social inequities; lack of access to education, poor economic and social services; poor infrastructures, etc. World organizations estimate that in our country more than P400 billion pesos are lost yearly to corruption. The conclusion is unavoidable: for our country to escape from poverty, we have to address the real causes of poverty and not population.

In the light of the above, we express our clear objections:

1. We object to the non-consideration of moral principles, the bedrock of law, in legislative discussions of bills that are intended for the good of individuals and for the common good.

2. We are against the anti-life, anti-natal and contraceptive mentality that is reflected in media and in some proposed legislative bills.

3. We object strongly to efforts at railroading the passage of the RH bill.

4. We denounce the over-all trajectory of the RH bill towards population control.

5. We denounce the use of public funds for contraceptives and sex-education.

6. We condemn compulsory sex education that would effectively let parents abdicate their primary role of educating their own children, especially in an area of life – sexuality – which is a sacred gift of God.

What We Stand For

On this matter of proposed RH bills, these are our firm convictions:

1. We are deeply concerned about the plight of the many poor, especially of suffering women, who are struggling for a better life and who must seek it outside of our country, or have recourse to a livelihood less than decent.

2. We are pro-life. We must defend human life from the moment of conception or fertilization up to its natural end.

3. We believe in the responsible and natural regulation of births through Natural Family Planning for which character building is necessary which involves sacrifice, discipline and respect for the dignity of the spouses.

4. We believe that we are only stewards of our own bodies. Responsibility over our own bodies must follow the will of God who speaks to us through conscience.

5. We hold that on the choices related to the RH bill, conscience must not only be informed but most of all rightly guided through the teachings of one's faith.

6. We believe in the freedom of religion and the right of conscientious objection in matters that are contrary to one's faith. The sanctions and penalties embodied in the proposed RH bill are one more reason for us to denounce it.

Our Calls

As religious leaders we have deeply and prayerfully reflected on this burning issue. We have unanimously made the moral judgment – to reject the RH agenda and to choose life.

1. We call for a fundamental transformation of our attitudes and behavior towards all human life especially the most defenseless, namely, human life being formed or being conceived. The eloquence with which many seem to consider human life as a great bane to our religious-oriented nation.

2. We call upon our legislators to consider this RH bill in the light of the God-given dignity and worth of human life and, therefore, to shelve it completely as contrary to our ideals and aspirations as a people. We thank our legislators who have filed bills to defend human life from the moment of conception and call upon all other legislators to join their ranks.

3. We thank the great multitude of lay people all over the country, and particularly the dedicated groups who made their presence felt on the halls of Congress, to defend and promote our position. We call upon other lay people and adherents of other religions to join the advocacy to defend and promote our commonly shared ideals and aspirations.

4. We call on our government to address effectively the real causes of poverty such as corruption, lack of social and economic services, lack of access to education and the benefits of development, social inequities.

5. We call for the establishment of more hospitals and clinics in the rural areas, the deployment of more health personnel to provide more access to health services, the building of more schools, the provision of more aid to the poor for education, and the building of more and better infrastructures necessary for development.

6. We echo the challenge we prophetically uttered 25 years ago at EDSA I and call upon all people of good will who share our conviction: "...let us pray together, reason together, decide together, act together, always in the end that the truth prevail" over the many threats to human life and to our shared human and cultural values.

We commend our efforts against the RH bill (or the Responsible Parenthood bill – its new name) to the blessing of our almighty and loving God, from whom all life comes and for whom it is destined.

For the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines,

+Nereo P. Odchimar, D.D.
Bishop of Tarlac
President, CBCP
January 30, 2011

Egypt military seeks end to demonstrations

From page A1

he chose to clear the streets.

Issue after several hundred pro-Mubarak supporters, some riding horses and camels and wielding whips, entered Tahrir (Liberation) Square, where a few thousand protesters had gathered, and clashes broke out, witnesses said.

People fought each other with sticks and stones while troops surrounding the square made no attempt to intervene, witnesses said.

It was the ninth day of protests that erupted last week as public frustration with corruption, repression and economic hardships under 30 years of rule by Mubarak boiled over.

Mubarak's decision yesterday, announcing the protests on state television on Wednesday morning, said: "The army forces are calling on you. You began by going out to express your demands and you are the ones on the path of restoring normal life."

Internet service is also returning to Egypt after days of an unprecedented crackdown by the government. And state TV says authorities are easing a nighttime curfew, which now runs from 5 p.m. to 7 a.m. instead of 4 p.m. to 8 a.m.

Washington, caught off guard by the wave of anger over oppression and hardship which has spread from Tunisia to one of its closest Arab allies, added pressure on Mubarak to speed up his response while stopping short of calling on him to quit.

"What is clear and what I think all would agree is President Mubarak is no longer in a position to lead the transition in a meaningful, it must be extended and it must begin now," US President Barack Obama said after speaking to Mubarak by phone.

Pro-Mubarak demos

Soon after Mubarak's speech, state television, which had largely supported the government protests, broadcast footage of smaller demonstrations held in support of the president.

In the Mediterranean city of Alexandria, clashes erupted between several hundred protesters and government supporters soon afterward, according to a footage by Al Jazeera television.

The protesters threw stones at their rivals, who wielded knives and sticks, until soldiers fired in the air and stepped in between them, and a truce was reached.

At Cairo's Tahrir, or Liberation, Square, focus of protests for a week, people debating a curfew initially criticized Mubarak for failing to hand them until his term in quit.

Army role crucial

"The speech is useless and only inflames our anger," said Hindi Morkus. "We will continue to protest."

HANDING ON: Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak addresses the nation on Egyptian State TV on Tuesday, the ninth day that massive protests have been marching on the streets, asking for him to step down and leave town. "This is my country ... and I will die on its soil." AP/File

Much will depend on the Army, once Mubarak's power base, which has dominated Egypt since it toppled the monarchy in 1952.

Many see the Army as trying to broker a transfer of power that would allow it to retain much of its influence. The military has promised not to fire on protesters and called their demands legitimate.

But some analysts said yesterday's speech could further erode the Army if Mubarak were to hang on too long, and if senior officers were seen to be protecting a leader who had lost legitimacy.

"The longer this goes on, the more people will associate the military's response with Mubarak. That is very dangerous," said Nayrat Fahmi, deputy head of Middle East and North Africa forecasting at Exclusive Analysis.

"It will put enormous strain on the security institutions."

A Twitter-based clerk from the Muslim Brotherhood, the officially banned Islamist party and the most organized Egyptian opposition group, also said there was a rift in the military.

"It will split hard so the Pro-Mubarak will bring the danger of conflict in the country. We were expecting him to be stubborn, but not to that extent," Kamal el-Helbawy said.

More a 'trick'

Shifted diplomat Mohammad ElBaradei, who has emerged as a leading figure in the opposition, was quoted by CNN calling Mubarak's move a "trick."

Tuesday's demonstration was on a massive scale, with tens of thousands of people answering opposition leaders' calls for Mubarak to step down and leave town. "This is my country ... and I will die on its soil."

Many were flying any more," said 30-year-old doctor Ahmed Khalifa. "If Egyptians stay on the streets till Friday, probably Mubarak's men either will be replaced by others."

Obama spoke to Mubarak for a half hour by telephone after he announced plans to step down in September.

Diplomatic tightrope

A senior administration official said Obama's conversation with Mubarak was frank and direct and left no doubt that "the time for transition is now. It can't be put off."

"He said it was clear how much he (Mubarak) loves his country and how difficult this is for him. President Obama explained to him that an orderly transition can't be prolonged. It must begin now," the official said.

Obama's statements were the clearest sign yet that Washington believes Mubarak may have to leave sooner rather than later.

But officials were reluctant to press openly for his resignation in order to avoid undermining other allies in the region who might face similar pressure.

His departure would soon figure in the politics of the Middle East, with implications from Israel—which signed a peace treaty with Egypt in 1979—to oil giant Saudi Arabia.

Chaos at Cairo airport

The United States ordered nonessential US government personnel and their families to leave Egypt. They join a wave of people rushing to flee the country. Over 18,000 people were whelmed Cairo's international airport and threw it into chaos.

Egyptair staff scuffled with hordes passengers, and many passengers were demanded substantial bribes before obtaining for cigarettes to board other airplanes.

Banks, schools and the stock market in Cairo were closed for the third working day making cash tight. Bread prices spiraled.

Death toll 97

The official death toll from the crisis stood at 97, with thousands injured, though reports from witnesses across the country indicated the actual toll was far higher.

Just four weeks since the death of Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian who set himself on fire to protest oppression and corruption, the wave of anger he set in motion has gathered strength across the region.

King Abdullah of Jordan replaced his prime minister on Tuesday after protests. Yemen and Sudan have also seen unrest.

The unrest has sent oil prices higher on fears of losses in Saudi Arabia and on Egypt's Suez Canal. That in turn has triggered concern a further rise in inflation, increasing the potential for social unrest far beyond the Middle East. Reports from Reuters and AP

Pagasa: PH faces 'creeping disaster'; unusual rainfall, intense typhoon

From page A1

that what we are having right now is a creeping disaster," Senator Undersecretary Gaudiano Fuentebella.

In January alone, 44 of the 51 stations of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) in the country recorded unusually high rainfall readings. Some recorded levels of more than 1,000 millimeters.

Tuesday said more than 11 typhoons were expected to hit the country and warned that there would be intense

2 dead in Caraga

After swamping the Caraga provinces for five days, the heavy rain caused on Wednesday two dead and nearly 300,000 displaced in many areas.

Floodwaters have not yet fully receded and several remote villages have been not yet received relief assistance because of the continuous rains, according to Blancilie Ushoring, the Office of the Civil Defense in Caraga. The region groups the provinces of Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur and Dinagat Islands.

Ushoring said the death toll so far stood at 19, while 11 persons were reported missing.

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Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

Across the NATION

Highway patrol group next stop for cop sacked amid car thefts

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The police chief of Pampanga who was removed from his post in the wake of car theft operations in the province is applying for transfer to the Highway Patrol Group (HPG), the Philippine National Police unit that is in charge of car theft cases.

He was replaced by the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG).

The PNP put a new director in Pampanga following the discovery in the province of five safe houses being operated by a car theft syndicate linked to the murders of two car dealers last month.

Chief Supt. Alan Purisima, Central Luzon police director, said, however, that the replacement of Senior Supt. Hermogenes Bolizado by Senior Supt. Edgardo Tinio as Pampanga police director was not related to car theft operations in the province.

Purisima said the removal of Bolizado and his possible transfer to the HPG had been planned since November.

Plum post

In separate rites on Tuesday, Bolizado said he wanted to be promoted and had applied to become deputy director for operations of the HPG based in Camp Crame, the PNP headquarters.

Purisima said Bolizado volunteered to be sidelined out of the list of three contenders for the post of Philippine police chief. The other contenders were police regional directors Jesus Versoza of Southern Luzon and Leonardo Espina of Northern Luzon.

A NEW crackdown on stolen vehicles hit near the offices of the PNP regional headquarters of the Highway Patrol Group in Camp Olivas, San Fernando, Pampanga. [redacted]

But police sacrificed the post in an acting capacity six months ago from Senior Supt. Manuel Gaudian, Tinio's classmate in the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1983.

Tinio says Gen. Lilia Pinedo's choice, Tinio did intelligence, administration and anti-kidnapping work before becoming chief of the regional ISN, almost two years ago.

Tinio called as "work in progress" the campaign to rid Pampanga of safe houses kept by car theft and other criminal syndicates.

Purisima cited the Pampanga police under Bolizado for its anti-insurgency campaign and operations against crime groups. Among its accomplishments, he said, were the killing of two car thieves, arrest of suspected car theft syndicate leader Roger Dominguez in August and the busting of the Bonnie Chua robbery group.

"I admitted we [slowed down] last December because after we arrested Ogie [Roger Dominguez] and turned him over to the Bulacan [police], he managed to post bail," he said.

Roger Dominguez and his brother, Raymund, were linked to the murder of car traders Vicente Evangelista, Fourman Lozano and Lozano's companion, Ernesto Sorrel, who were abducted in separate incidents in Quezon City last month.

Their bodies were found dumped and burned in separate areas in Central Luzon.

Purisima ordered Tinio and other provincial police directors in the region to intensify the anti-crime campaign, step up counter-intelligence efforts so that informers engaged in criminal activities and enforce moral standards among their men.

Car thefts continued in Metro Manila despite police claims that the cases of car thefts have declined in a recent survey.

Police have discovered a vast lot for car parts in Apalit, Pampanga, but finished units reportedly had been dumped in Cavite.

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State school head's term 'protected' vs politicians

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—In an apparent violation of the rules of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), trustees of the state-owned Pampanga Agricultural College (PAC) have renewed the term of the PAC president two years before his term ended amid stalemate forming a committee to evaluate his performance, documents showed.

By photo on Tuesday, PAC president Hamerto Soriano Jr. said the board, in a meeting on Dec. 21, 2010, confirmed his appointment until 2015.

The PAC board on Aug. 24, 2009 approved Soriano's reappointment.

The minutes showed that Benigno Mercado, regional director of the National Economic and Development Authority, "agreed that the [PAC board] was out of appointment in advance."

Gerardo Oliveros Jr., director of the Department of Science and Technology in Central Luzon, proposed the early renewal of Soriano's term "in order for Mercado to be included."

Only the student trustee, Andrea Mae Balisacan, opposed the reappointment.

The board approved Resolution No. 09-39 renewing Soriano's term for an additional four years.

Nothing in the minutes showed that the board had formed an evaluation committee.

CHED rules require evaluation of an incumbent state school or university president prior to reappointment.

Soriano said an evaluation committee was not formed to review his performance.

"It was not. I also pursued that. It was the board that initiated that," he said. Tanveer Oyao, Inquirer Central Luzon

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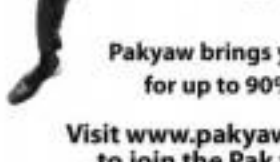

Thieves strike in bus tragedy

By Dolly T. Hubol Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LUCENA CITY—Some of the injured passengers of a Manila-bound bus from Bicol that plunged into a ravine in Pagbilao were complained of losing their belongings to thieves.

Jocelyn de Leon recalled that when the crippled coaster was now that a man who rushed to the accident site was opening her bag.

"I immediately grabbed my bag. We're all needing help but some of them resisted to steal our belongings," she said. She suffered a cut on the forehead.

Bo Baglio (not his name) for Manila fell into a ravine as it negotiated a zigzag road in Pagbilao. There were no fatalities but 38 passengers suffered various injuries.

Some of the injured passengers were rushed to the Sam Country Hospital in Pagbilao.

THE EAGLE Star bus that plunged into the ravine lies on its side. [redacted]

Joy Celosa lost her video camera during the accident. "I was holding my video cam when the bus fell," she said.

"I let go of my camera to protect the young boy who sat next to me. After the commotion, I could no longer find my camera," Celosa said yesterday.

Other passengers said they also lost their mobile phones.

Tenorio de Baron, also one of the passengers, said his wife lost more than P5,000 in her bag.

"That's the only money that we had. We're both hungry but we can't buy even a loaf of bread because we haven't money left," he told reporters in an interview at the hospital.

Baron said one of his eight children in Manila sent P3,500 for the couple's fare to return to Leyte.

Ex-judge draws P25,000 in fine

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY— The Supreme Court ordered a retired judge to pay a P25,000 fine for interfering in the choice of lawyers of litigants in a land case that he once handled.

Manuel Limsiaco Jr., former presiding judge of the 6th Municipal Circuit Trial Court who retired on May 17, 2009, had been accused also of offering a "package deal."

The SC second division, however, in a decision on Jan. 19 upheld the recommendation of Executive Judge Prospero Gumarao of the Bago City Regional Trial Court, finding Limsiaco guilty only of misconduct for interfering in the choice of lawyers and preparing pleadings for litigants.

The SC ordered the P25,000 fine deducted from Limsiaco's retirement benefits. The decision was based on a 2007 complaint filed against Limsiaco by Florenda Tolosa.

Tolosa said in her complaint that Limsiaco offered her a package deal for a case she planned to file against couple Raymundo and Francisca Batalla whom Tolosa wanted ejected from land that she owned.

The complaint quoted Salvacion Sigillera, court stenographer, as saying Limsiaco was selling a package deal for P50,000 that included a lawyer, pleadings and a favorable decision.

Sigillera asked for a P10,000 down payment. On June 23, 2006, the complainant said, the money was delivered to the retired judge's home. This was followed by the filing of the case in Limsiaco's court and the choice of lawyer Robert Jeanillo as Tolosa' legal counsel.

The complaint said Tolosa' refusal to heed Limsiaco's demand for P10,000 more angered the retired judge and led to Jeanillo's withdrawal from the case on April 16, 2007.

The case was also withdrawn. Limsiaco, Sigillera and Jeanillo denied the accusations in their written reply to the complaint to the SC.

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Joe Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Pamela Q. Subingsubing

'Even the dolphins cry for Doc Gerry'

By Agnes Primo
Contributor

THE DOLPHINS were cavorting in Puerto Princesa bay that day as "Doc" Gerry Ortega led his ride-an-ecotourism adventure explained how it was possible for tourists to be guaranteed a glimpse of these delightful but elusive creatures. In the past, one could sit in the boat all day in the sea with nary a sighting.

We had just planned to from Manila with Barmy Balikasan advocates headed by Ortega Lopez. Four was Barmy Balikasan head he Palawan and without much ado, after depositing bags in the hotel, hied us off to the pier for the dolphin-watch boats.

"It is a wonderful play of interdependencies in nature," he said. "One species is connecting with the next in a cycle of give and take."

"The planktons that nurture in these seas are eaten daily are food for tuna fish, which flock here in sea. The tuna fish, in turn, are food for dolphins who come around here for a meal. The birds that hover also feed on the fish," he continued.

"The fishermen see the birds, which guide them to the location of the tuna and the dolphins around the fishing area. The fishermen are now equipped with cell phones, which enable excited sightseeing boats to sail to the exact location where they may appreciate the presence of dolphins. And such is the cycle of nature, which now responds to include the tourism and technological resources."

Doc Gerry has been a pioneer in practical ecotourism in Palawan through which there is respect for these cycles, the conservation and stability of nature resources is ensured, while allowing visitors to be educated and to marvel at them.

The wonder of the dolphins becomes an appreciation of the patterns of nature coming together, presenting the bigger picture of the sky and the sea.

Viable ecotourism

His vision of viable ecotourism were away from the big business model, which comes in with investor money and conveyor structures, blockading the culture, the beautiful sites as mere commodities for which they charge them money in the process opening pockets of exploitation, that eventually marginalizes the human factor in the.

We headed for lunch at a small islet, which is also a fish sanctuary, all the while listening to his narration of how ecotourism were being nurtured to be tourism providers themselves, such as the fishermen who now earn extra income from being marine tourist guides.

This was the marine model, which, as the Palawan head of Barmy Balikasan, he proudly espoused.

Fishing and tourist boats proudly manned by fishermen and their families had been allocated for the task.

Private sanctuaries

The next model was an inland man-made lake within an orchard in Iwahig, off the city proper.

It was discovered that over time, various birds endemic to Palawan had been coming here to roost. Amid the mango orchard we sat, listening our ecotours on the birds, staying as quiet as possible as they swooped and dived into the clear waters in the skies.

The storks, the wandering whistling ducks, the Philippines night herons, the purple heron, the blue breasted quail, ducks and more ... they made this their homing grounds.

Doc Gerry was privy to his private sanctuaries such as these off-the-beaten tourist track. Born and raised Palawanon, he had his sights honed to both manifestations. More than a school learned environmentalist, he had in heart an appreciation for and

GAYIGA

a concern for the beauty of the land that were really deep into his "pagkatao" (personality).

Our next stop was the Iwahig River in our dash and the cicadas were filling the deepening darkness with their sonic lament of music. This was to be the firefly tour and the boat men turned off their lamps motors as we glided into that magical river bounded on both sides by the mangroves, which housed the fireflies.

Points of light

The dark in Palawan are full of stars, much more than we can ever imagine in the city. The constellations are all visible and in the boat we sat on the starlight, is several feet (these flicks of light that blanketed the sky had actually descended to the level of the mangroves, all the way to the river so that there was an unending view of tiny points of light from the heavens, down to the waters.

Starlight and firefly light. Words beggar the experience. Doc Gerry enabled us to understand the ecology behind all these—that the mangrove supported insect life like the fireflies, apart from being the lungs of the earth, serving as filter all pollution.

"If we can save the mangroves, all the animal and plant life will wither away and disappear. The fireflies will no longer come," he emphasized.

We cap the evening with dinner of fresco and head off to bed early for the next day's sights—the Underground River and a barangay in nearby Sarangani, which he helped develop as a pioneering community-based tourist destination. Instead of big business coming in to exploit the natural attractions, he trained people to initially appreciate what they had, right in their own backyards and to open those up to guests.

Natural hospitality

"The natural hospitality and warmth of the Filipino makes it a cinch to create a wholesale tourist destination, which not only focuses on the local attractions but integrates everyone in the community to offer their resources—their homes, their food, their gardens," he explained.

The result is a festive atmosphere that has everyone from young children to grandparents pitching in their effort to welcome guests. The home-stay programs assure tourists of warm welcome within the homes of the local families.

The integration process that happens when people live and eat together, even if only for some days, has an impact unequaled by any stay in a five-star hotel. Memories are created and often, lifelong friendships develop.

Another community-based model is the Honda Bay Island-hik excursion there. In the past, the fishermen were wont to use destructive methods of fishing, only to realize that these had a long lasting damage on the very source of their livelihood. Doc Gerry had convinced the fishermen to protect the coral resources that provided nurturing grounds for fish propagation.

Honda Bay

The beauty of a coral reef with gamble colors of fish swimming is unrivaled and, today, the tourist program in Honda Bay is where the fishermen, the fishermen and their children, for not only have their catch increased, their tourism efforts also add to the family kitty. They serve as guides to the 12 islands of Honda Bay.

The remarkable thing about Doc Gerry is that he did not preach or scold, but assured people by his dedication and focus. His seriousness for tourism arose in this, young people and not so young, who realize that Palawan can only be valuable as a source destination if everyone took the effort and has the heart for it. There is no exploitation, only integration and appreciation.

Through volunteer work, he created a large circle of interdependencies centered on respect and pride of place, fostering the values of what one had, and the willingness to share.

Now, Doc Gerry is gone. The cycle is truncated, the wheel of fruitful interaction, broken.

The seeds he planted though, will flourish. It is the promises we make, we who are left behind if only to gentle ensure in his terrible death.

Farewell, the dolphins are crying.

Agnes Primo says she is a neighbor in Puerto Princesa City of Gerry Ortega, who had requested her to write about his ecotourism vision-long before he was ambushed by a bullet in his head.)

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CONFIRMATION HEARING

Miriam blocks Ona; Ochoa sails through

THE COMMISSION on Appointments (CA) yesterday suspended committee deliberations on Health Secretary Enrique Ona largely over Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago's displeasure with Ona's stand on the controversial issue of organ transplants.

The senior and Duri moderate and professional record was excellent, acknowledging that he was "one of the most prominent kidney transplant surgeons in the country."

But she said she was bothered by his stand on commercial kidney transplants.

Santiago said that, recognizing kidneys between two related living persons was understandable, say from a wife to a husband, because "human nature exceeds the limitations of biology."

But transplanting kidneys from a living person to another, who is not a relative and a foreigner at that, was another matter, she said.

And she noted that more often than not, it's the poor who sell their kidneys.

"Why would we allow our financial resources to sell their bodies to foreign patients and reflect medical tourism?" she said.

Santiago asked Ona if he was enforcing former Health Secretary Esperanza Cabral's administrative order prohibiting non-related kidney donations, but Ona said he knew before Ona could give his answer.

Ona said he would seek a meeting with Santiago to explain his stand.

Early in yesterday's hearing, Santiago threatened to invoke Sec. 20 of the CA rules to vote Ona's appointment to the plenary, if the CA health sub-committee did not postpone consideration "until we have reached a compromise with the principles of the nominee."

The sub-committee agreed to postpone deliberations on Ona.

By contrast, Executive Secretary Paquito Ochoa Jr. breezed through the confirmation process, for appointment being confirmed by the plenary.

Ona told the sub-committee that the health department was following Superintendent's directive prohibiting kidney donations among non-relatives.

"Unfortunately, our experience—and this holds true all over the world—not more than 20 percent of those who would like to be transplanted would have a related donor and so therefore you have to depend on deceased organ donation which we have been working very hard on for the last 20 years," he said. TJ Burgonio

Abu man in Drilon kidnap falls

ZAMBOANGA CITY—An Abu Sayyaf member linked to high-profile abductions, including that of television reporter Ces Drilon, was arrested in downtown Basilan in Tuan Tawi on Monday after nine years in hide.

Supt. Felicisimo Khu, head of the Directorate for Integrated Police Operations in Western Mindanao, told the Inquirer that Andri Itah alias Andi was part of the group that snatched Drilon and her crew and Mindanao State University professor Dennis Dimampo on June 20, 2000 in Jolo.

Itah, he said, was also part of the larger Abu Sayyaf group that took hostages, including foreigners, from the Dos Palmas resort in Palawan in 2001 and the Sipadan resort in Malaysia a year before that.

Dimampo confirmed that Itah was one of their captors.

"He is a native of Patikul and a relative of brothers Jul and Joanil Itah, who were known as core members of Ruchdahan Nahron's group," he said by phone.

Dimampo described Itah as "about 5'7" to 5'8" in height, has a fair complexion, curly hair and wore dentures.

Khu said the man that Dimampo described was the same suspect the police had in its custody.

Itah, he said, would be transported to the city before he is transferred to Metro Manila, where dozens of Abu Sayyaf suspects are jailed. Jodie Aripala, Inquirer Mindanao

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INQUIRER

OPINION

Atty. Jekyll & Mrs. Heidi

TUESDAY'S HEARING of the committee on justice of the House of Representatives was revelatory in more ways than one. But of the many civics lessons we learned from about six hours of televised hearings, perhaps the sharp contrast we all drew between two kinds of government worker is the one we will remember for a long time.

EDITORIAL

On the one hand was the example of former government auditor Heidi Mendoza, who repeatedly went out of her way to meet both her own high personal standards and the government objectives entrusted to her. (Two examples: She declined the offer of gasoline subsidies from the military, knowing that it would compromise her. And she served 16 times, even after her resignation from government service, as witness against former AFP comptroller Carlos F. Garcia in his Sandiganbayan trial.)

On the other was Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez, who defined her responsibilities in running after the corrupt in government in the most limited way. (Two examples: She blithely accepted the belated view of her prosecutors that the two admissions of Charito Garcia, the ex-general's wife, could not be used as evidence. And she approved a plea bargain proposal the very day after Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio, who pushed the case against Garcia, resigned from the service.)

To be sure, we shouldn't lose sight of the important decisions made under each last Tuesday—that, to cite only three examples, two commissioners of the Commission on Audit, including the chairman at the time, showed a marked zeal in our view culpable lack of support for Mendoza's investigation into the confounding finances of the Armed Forces; that a check for P200 million bearing Garcia's signature was handled in the most questionable fashion, and may be related to an onerous pullout or send-off gift to one lucky AFP chief of staff; that two military comptrollers may have used their connections to deliver undue and illegal benefits from the "float" of dollar-denominated funds remitted by the United Nations for the account of the AFP.

We also shouldn't fail to note the bits and mimes in the handling of the committee hearing itself. We commend Rep. Neil Tupas Jr. for his dogged pursuit of the Garcia case which led to Gutierrez's first-ever appearance in a congressional hearing. We commend Tupac Gabriel for his tendency to beg the microphone by asking questions his committee members could well have asked themselves. We recognize Rep. Rodolfo Fariñas' able handling of the afternoon session, but worry that his suggestion to host dinner for Gutierrez and her predecessor and adversary, Simeon Marcelo, is only yet another case of high-level oogle or special arrangement. We deplore Rep. Marc Douglas Cagas' shameless and transparent lawyering for Garcia and others, repeatedly invoking a legal maxim in Latin he could not even pronounce properly and issuing inane Divorcase already well-settled) questions about the power of Congress to conduct inquiries.

But it is the contrast between Mendoza and Gutierrez that provides the best civics lesson of all.

Mendoza is no saint. Or rather, and more precisely, she can be as exasperating as a saint. By her own admission, she failed to console her husband and her family when she decided to resign from an enviable position in the Asian Development Bank, in order to devote herself to the cause of informing the public about the truth of the Garcia case. But these human limitations are precisely what make her revelations resonant. Her undoubted competence in auditing makes her testimony convincing, but it is her self-evident passion to let the truth out, no matter what the cost, that makes her account persuasive.

Gutierrez, unfortunately, is no knight in shining armor. Those of us who want the office of the ombudsman, one of the most powerful in the entire government, to be filled by a fearless advocate of truth and justice, animated by a reforming zeal and a legal resourcefulness equal to the office's great powers, will have to wait for her successor.

There, then, lies the true horror, which helps explain the Ombudsman's abysmal conviction rate: the official. Mind-numbing dedication ends up rewarding government corruption, while the unusual, impassioned face-out only wail in desperation.

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The origins of graft

THE WORD "graft," now only rarely used, is probably most descriptive of illicit office practices found in transitional societies like ours that "metaphysic," to semantic strain. The term comes from horticulture: from it stem the synonyms *scion* (which it is) and, *shoot*, or *sprout* of a plant inserted in a groove, slit, or the like in a stem or trunk of another plant in which it continues to grow." "Graft" is also used in surgery to refer to the transplantation of living matter from one part of a body to another, or from one human being to another.

Now that the term, as used in science, is not burdened by moral overtones—unlike "corruption," the best system may entail—upon the graft, or it may incorporate it. If the graft is vital, it becomes part of the host system, but its malignant touch must be borne, as in medicine, there may be a dramatic relief from troublesome symptoms. Some problems are solved, but, then again, new problems may crop up.

There is no single rule guide to organizing effective institutional arrangements. The reforms or to see how a certain system and persists, and when problems is solves and creates. The beginnings of graft in the bureaucracy are sometimes benign, even well-intentioned. Some legal systems in the Philippines, such as the one way of raising "petty cash" from which unbudgeted expenditures may be funded. These expenses are often justifiable, but reflect there an through the million process of filing a requisition form and receiving indefinitely be approved, the office finds it more convenient to dip into its "savings." Before anyone realizes it, this slush fund—as in the requisitions of the Armed Forces, the Commission on Command Control Communications and Intelligence" or PCDS—becomes big, and because it is not subject to official audit, the all-purpose kitty, meant originally to give the office a little flexibility and discretion, begins to be abused.

The small graft that was supposed to relieve bureaucratic problems arising from rigid budgetary rules becomes the dominant element in the

PUBLIC LIVES

Randy David

functioning of the system. The cure happens in any bureaucracy, especially in organizations with weak internal controls. Under such circumstances, the only check against graft is the personal honesty of the head of the office.

One can almost visualize how this happens in the ordinary Otto-Weberian setup: At the desk head in the kitchen from ordinary suppliers. This is probably remembered: one member of only one person or a group in charge of procurements comes all the "gifts" from the suppliers.

In the case against former AFP comptroller Carlos F. Garcia, the broad gestures from the Office of the Ombudsman took their cue from the affidavit filed by Mrs. Charito B. Garcia before the UN Customs, in due customers, the order of the general tried to explain where the money that her sons were caught smuggling into the US came from. She pointed out ordinary sources: are in sources of generous gifts. This closely wasn't the whole story.

The Ombudsman investigators followed the money and property trail of the Garcias and came up with a catalogue of suspected ill-gotten assets. But, so far able to prove the value of plunder they had to identify the ordinary suppliers and contractors who bribed Garcia. Unless they can show proof of how exactly these assets were illegally obtained, the State cannot restrain Garcia by the plunder. The government may seize (confiscate) assets if he cannot prove they are the fruits of known felony. But that is still a case de.

Viewed from this perspective, one can understand the Ombudsman's sense of relief when Garcia offered to plead guilty to the lesser offense of direct bribery and to surrender about P1.35 million in assets, in exchange for taking off the names of his wife and three sons from the charge sheet as principal co-conspirators. This plea bargain seems to have enjoyed the very approval of the Sandiganbayan. It could have been worked more to but the problem is: exactly that, granted Garcia's release on last late December.

Now there is new information coming from the respective commissioner of retired AFP budget officer George Rabusa and former government auditor Heidi Mendoza as the ongoing legislative hearings. The information points not to kickbacks from suppliers and contractors but to 10% funds meant as reimbursement for 70 spine soldiers sent abroad as part of the UN peacekeeping forces, which funds are paid directly to the AFP instead of remitted to the Treasury. US government reimbursements for expenses incurred in the Balikatan joint military exercises are apparently also remitted in the same way.

The availability of such huge unappropriated funds to any agency is a great temptation for graft. Mendoza showed what happened to one UN check amounting to P600 million, payable to the AFP, as it morphed into various unauthorized uses. Similarly, the money disappeared into the account of an unnamed depositor. None of this is possible without the collusion of the banks. Someone from the participating banks would have to sensitive compliance. But documentary evidence against Garcia and the recipients of the military pension. One of these recipients, said Rabusa, was former AFP Chief of Staff Angelo Reyes, who allegedly received P50 million from this slush fund for retirement gift.

These testimonial show us a more complete picture of graft in the military. But they may not be sufficient to send anyone to jail. In the meantime, graft will continue until, like a cancerous tumor, it is finally exposed by a modern surgical system.

Email: public.lives@gmail.com

Contrasts

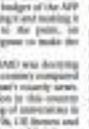
SUCCEEDING TO a story in the paper last weekend, a former GMA general who prefers to remain anonymous doubts that Angelo Reyes got a million when he left. The reason for it sets me that Reyes was too greedy as Reyes himself proposed advancing his service, ex-George Rabusa. It was simply that it was not necessary. The generals were well provided for as a matter of course, getting monthly sums that assured they would live comfortably (as debate complexities as we can get when they retired).

The AFP he said, normally held a huge reserve that lent no specific allowance. What were the generals to do with it? Part of it went to donations to the soldiers' medical aids, part of it went to donations to the soldiers' welfare, and part of it went to donations to the generals' favorite charity, which began at home. Of course the first and second were dwarfed by the third. So, the generals were well taken care of, policies were mostly optional.

What is mind-boggling about this is not just the disparity or contrast between the lives of the generals and the foot soldiers, though that is mind-boggling enough in itself. The conditions of the foot soldiers are well known, not least because the generals themselves call attention to them when they call for a hike in the AFP budget, which is all the time. Being a foot soldier means quite literally having to brainwash, or one is thrown out as an enabler the meaning of the word. All this while the generals are singing karaoke and laughing their way to the bank. Reyes is well known to be fond of the line...close some lines he learned one of the finest "Dear Tessy," Alley Subaya, he will be back. Reyes is fond of the line and—we can only hope he sings like a canary during interrogation.

But far more than this, the truly mind-boggling thing about it is the disparity in common investment. The soldiers in the AFP and elsewhere. Child of them, education.

Only a couple of months ago, 19 was new with students and students serving plausible



THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

protesting the wrapping of several score out. signs and the owners' wishes of those going to the state universities. Bunch Wood defended this by saying that government was hard up and that in any case it was an effort to restore the public school system to make it more efficient. Whether that is true or not remains debatable. What is not debatable is the sense of situation that is simmering in slum heads it doesn't quite know what to do with it. In this time, the budget deputation has not recommend a reduction of the budget of the AFP on the grounds of restructuring it and making it more effective. Or more to the point, on grounds of preserving its purpose to make the generals stay corrupt.

And just a month ago USAID was decrying the near-total abandonment in the country compared to its Asian neighbors. It wasn't exactly news. The state of higher education in this country you can see from the ranking of universities in the region. Up until the 1970s, UP, Ateneo and La Salle were still among the top 50. I do not know that they are among the top 200 today. As to lower education, forget the cosmetic about conditions rates, dropout rates and whatever other rates you have. Mind only that public school students are forced to sell box and canteen to make both ends meet.

That is what I particularly mind about this business of making the generals happy. It is not who is enslaved, it is who is disenfranchised. The other side of fewer living comfortably is sometimes passing through the refuse in Payatas and scrabbling for subsistence in city dumps.

Even if corruption were not rife in the AFP, even if the infamously-called "command share" of economic fund" did not get to be directed only to the command, I don't see why the military's coffers should be full and armaments deployed. It's a warped sense of priorities that makes appearing the soldiers more important than educating the citizens. The logic of course is that the soldier performs the vital task of keeping the country's enemies at bay, and that if he isn't kept happy he can always be enticed about his enemies and train his guns on the citizens instead. But what applies to the soldier applies even more to the student.

The country has no direct threat of extinction—save from economic and ecological—than ignorance. The country have no direct threat of extinction— save from economic and ecological—than ignorance. The country have no direct threat of extinction— save from economic and ecological—than ignorance. The country have no direct threat of extinction—

Aquino claims Arroyo term's gains

BY A. POMPOSO (previous tab Friday in Malacañang, Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima was reaching out to not to be bashed over to President Aquino's pleche of P59 billion representing dividends of government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs) turned over to the National Treasury.

In his speech, the President claimed that three years in the country's history it hasn't been well. "So you can see, we are working overtime to better our abilities to give back to the Filipino people what they have given us," he said.

He even boasted that the huge remittances could not have been made under the previous administration since the GOCCs at that time were "the nothing town of corporations and their wards."

Mr. Aquino was visibly elated when the figure for the P59 billion remittances were announced from revenues generated by GOCCs during President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's term—some even for the month 2009 to 2010. The P59.1 billion remittances surpassed the previous level with P1.3 billion, more dividends on the BSP's income for 2009, the monetary authority's representatives explained. The bulk of these P59.1 billion remittances came from GOCCs that were from 2005 to 2009. The BSP remitted the income to the Treasury after the Commission on Audit concluded after nearly a year's study that the Overseas Bank of Manila had remitted more dividends to the government.

The dividends from the other state firms could not have been made on revenues made under Aquino's watch simply because the GOCCs declare dividends only after the close of the year, Commission on Audit spokesman Atty. Jose Tejada explained. Most GOCCs have their books audited after each year's end by the Commission on Audit, scrutinized after nearly a year's study that the government had not remitted were already in their hands by then.

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OUTLOOK

Rigoberto Tiglao

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Hail, Heidi

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

I HATE this piece to add to the many voices and written pieces hailing the good, the true and the wonderful that have risen out of the deadly scare that threatens to destroy this nation.

This haunted piece may not sound like a piece of goodness but I write this to humbly and personally say "Thank you, Heidi Mendoza." Thank you for trusting the war in the wilderness, for shaking the bull pen, for showing us how to be a Filipino patriot, for the courage to stand alone.

Those past days I've been constantly hearing sentiments about the bad news hogging the headlines both in the print and the broadcast media. Where are the good news? Many demand to know. Some even grumble that the news is always the same as any have. It's as if we in the media have not been feeding the fire good news hard enough.

But many from out of the bad news comes the goodness. Like the bad news of the corruption in the former government found sealed Heidi Mendoza of the Commission on Audit (COA) who dunked this nation with her detailed account of how millions in Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) funds were lost to the coffers of the Arroyo family and its such a case and camera way, how pressure deliberately incited on their dark intentions. That's not good news?

But is it? The good news here is the fact that our lower rooms must one of the dark to tell the world what she knew, how she knew, why she knew. She was right there when the happened and she would make sense of it. And so she comes, she recognizes the truth, she tells the truth, she brings charged before us. But not before she had gotten a good grasp of the evil that was creeping and would point to damning evidence that would throw her family in jail.

She, yes, Heidi Ilian she is no father! Dr. Indonesian Ernesto Maceda who tapped Mendoza to help locate the plunder case against former Senator Jinggoy Estrada and Philippines composite Cat. 3 E Garcia. Maceda's both sons had been friends with he, like his biblical namesake, can now thank he "from Damsus."

Now, many may have a tendency, springing up

(continued on page A12)

Constance

THE FIRST thing I noticed about her was her blonde hair, her sparkling green eyes with a dash of blue, and her fair and smooth skin. But as she lifted her dish to my plate, my eyes widened when I saw that her fingernails were shiny. That led me to take a closer look at the overall picture. Her white shoes had no shoelaces, her slippers were muddy, her hair disheveled and tied up into a messy ponytail.

Constance lives in a small apartment in the slums of Caloocan. While it is equipped with basic furnishings, it is a far cry from her comfortable, if not luxurious, home in France. There she lives in a big house surrounded by a plantation consisting of several hectares. Her parents and a tutor for her children also live in that house. Here she cooks her own food or buys some to eat and washes her own clothes. Her original Filipino was: with a bit of strain, a little time and a wooden palo-palo.

YOUNG BLOOD

Fides Cuenico

She describes herself as a volunteer. She helps out two French NGOs that help take care of a retirement home and a nursery with approximately 300 children in Buenos, Bernard, Binay meeting, she does activities for the children and the elderly. She also helps out in the orphanage there back in their homes. And in the morning she writes a note on every workshop submitted by the children. She jokes that the most tedious of this three tasks is the last one because of her limited English vocabulary.

When I first heard about what she is doing, I was perplexed. Why would she leave the comforts among the people. I was dumb-founded. What moved me most was hearing that while she was quite sad to spend the warm holidays away from her family, away from what was customary for her, she was also very excited to spend it with her current neighbors and community.

The Philippines must indeed be a beautiful place and Filipinos must be a very nice people. After all, only good words come out of Constance's mouth whenever she tells me about her experiences in the past three months. Her years alone have kind and words her neighbors are, how exquisite is our cuisine especially when they are served on plates decorated on the river (Ilog and smells) and how wonderful it is to be surrounded by enthusiastic and happy are deprived children.

There is a woman with whom I would call the "upside phenomenon." Her ears sparkle when we catch an opportunity to help and her presence makes the children's eyes light up. This sparkle because she finds beauty in the most mundane things.

After spending a week with Constance in Sumulo, I saw the picture more clearly and my understanding of it grew deeper. And with my realization, my mind, my heart, my soul were filled with gratitude. Gratitude for a French woman who gave up her months of her life, leave all the comforts behind to help a destitute community in a foreign land, why can't more Filipinos do the same?

Everyone feels pity for the poor, sees charity as a remedial virtue and is moved to act in his to give to poor. But what many of us don't realize is that pity without action is useless. Our charity without consistency is unavailing and doing one's duty without commitment is self-serving.

In high school, our teachers encourage us to join outreach activities. Oftentimes we view it corresponding grade because of the requirement. Or we see it as a way to get excused for a part of the curriculum; we cannot graduate without having rendered service for a specified period. Many of us feel fulfilled after taking part in a big cause. However once our grade appears on our report cards or once the semester is over, our duty is done.

The desire to help is not enough. One should put it into action and follow through. I'm not saying we should do what Constance did and leave our lives behind. But surely we can give back to our communities in one way or another and help make our country a better place. Help comes in many forms: monthly visits, monetary donations, payments for philanthropies, annual collections of hand-me-downs and more. Despite the lack of finances, the local schedule, the pressing workload, the remoteness of a place, our lack of knowledge, there is always something we can contribute. And we can do it now.

Every act of kindness, every act of charity changes a life positively. I'd like to think that every person helped is also inspired to do the same thing. And that the expansion of one person, the alleviation of the condition of one family is revitalizing a community.

We ought to stop making excuses and start doing something. Let us ignite the fire that will make every Filipino can be his assignment. We too can sparkle and provide light to those who live in distress areas and make their lives brighter.

Fides Cuenico, 22, is a registered nurse and part-time freelance writer and a communications trainee at 9.6 Asian RELTO Review Center.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inq.net. com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or if employed, the name of the work's holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

The strange rebirth of American leadership

WORLD VIEW

Kenneth Weisbrode

FLORENCE—At the recent annual meetings of the American Economic Association, there was widespread pessimism about the future of the United States. "The age of American primacy appears to have" declared one economist. "The US should brace for social unrest and political turmoil," who was responsible for squandering global primacy," said another.

We have heard this many times before, not only in the US but also in other places as well. George Santayana's controversial theory "The benign Wrath of Liberal England," describes his country's sudden decline as the result of its power to the one whole last century. The world everyone knew simply and inexplicably changed, wrote Sharp historian Amos Elon of the Tel Aviv's influences, for example) that thus something similar is happening to their own country. Order it has already happened.

Europe's elites have also concerned over a crisis of institutions, politics and personalities, set against the three-dimensional of the time. Americans, however, have generally been averse to crisis analysis. They are not in the habit of thinking that way—especially that Americans are among the fallen of the "rest." Americans, again from the darkest and poorest, define themselves as "middle class." Each considers themselves themselves.

Still, it is right to ask if the American way of life and way of life can continue. Or it does, whether it will survive in America or migrate elsewhere as the US economy and political system collapse under the accumulated weight of decades of myopic national leadership and squandered opportunities. Indeed, Clinton Presidential Library and Center opened in Washington was seen by many, particularly many Democrats, as the passing of the torch.

Pessimists have been saying this for a long time. Historians, running GDP and other indicators, will continue to make that historians now seem hard to be good. If there is any consensus worth underscoring, it is the regular combination of boom-then-bust and "crisis" that is always considered unusual but that could not simply.

It is no coincidence that during the Reagan/Bush years—the last time we sanctioned a foreign policy consistent with such large deficits—a book title, roughly that "Rise of the Rest" (1988) could follow in the footsteps of Paul Kennedy's "The Rise and Fall of Great Powers" (1988). The former made a strong case for the US to "rise" to the challenge of Japan, the latter warned of "imperial overreach."

Both authors based their arguments on an assessment of the underlying economy—that is, the structure—of power. Both were criticized and dismissed because its global influence were increasingly out of balance with its national assets, and it was based on land because the world knew knew it is arranged by something for a long time.

Similar arguments have been raised again recently. Niall Ferguson and Richard Haass have regurgitated those much the formerly two and Kennedy, like Haass that is something like the US should avoid the trap of "imperial overreach" and "stick to the "day-to-day job" and the relative stagnation of the "West."

But are such writers making a valid point? If we look at a number of so-called structural consequences—the 1980s, 1920s, 1890s and 1790s, in particular—we see the outline of historical cycles that are not power-obsessed in a global context, only to "rebuild" and "renew" and fail a years of so-called their internal phenomenon.

Or maybe it's neither. The missing variable in most of these arguments, once that's leadership. Leaders are rarely heard to rise or fall by circumstance alone. Most historians place leadership at the background of human factors, with structural variables having conditioned, not caused, them. Because leaders are human, they, like their actions, may be the most perilous variable of theories and decisions.

Why have Americans been so good at leading? Are Americans especially blessed, or just lucky? Given that the US has at last begun to move, gradually and thoughtfully, away from the paradigm that characterized the country's response to the 2001 terrorist attacks, it is worth asking if NO Democrats was right to say that America's errors and more always proved against its errors and defeats.

The various presidential shows we can be interested in the history of the US, and in the US currently. They would rather have the US become more exploitative of in the ways of the world. Obama, for example, presumably drawing upon the many writing of Ed, most currently, urges Americans to learn from the mistakes of the past, to be more humble and careful in alliances among large and small states and non-state actors, as that diplomacy means to resemble something like the global democracies matters.

Americans don't like to do this argumentatively well, however, or theorize their country's own policies and policy-making may seem. While others so back to ours, sure. The US political experience was never designed to rely for much of its history on the ability of its leaders to frame any authoritarian or the hands of an all-powerful executive, and it is doubtful that American social engineers such activism is appropriate.

The survival of American success and experience yet difficult to quantify. Americans' pragmatism, optimism, fair-mindedness, inventiveness, adaptability, openness, and, above all, their inherent competitiveness—have been remarkably consistent virtues, impatience, self-righteousness and unprecedentedly their fondness for novelty and celebrity for their own sake, and their self-assertion are means —getting there, as they like to say, "home with the bacon."

Those who understand Americans' deep-rooted passion for "making it" know why there are very other Democrats has not succeeded in destroying American faith within. The American exceptionalism produces displacement to democracies, the rule will be the rule. That is still true, both at home and abroad.

Project Syndicate

Kenneth Weisbrode is a diplomatic historian. His most recent book is "The Atlantic Century."

THEY SAID

Wolf

"I can't blame them if they see him as a sheep. But in truth, he's as wolf in sheep's skin."

—Senate majority leader and Blue Dog Democrats on Democratic Rep. Jane Harman, after the senior secretly helped the "election spectacle."

Self-sufficiency

"Until we can feed our own population from our own production, without smuggling or importing, we are not yet out of the woods."

—Sen. Benjamin Diokno, chair of the committee to agriculture

Different critics

"I make a clear decision and [everyone from] who say it over read our decisions and started smoking, and those who actually took note and effort to understand and what really [we're saying]."

—Chief Justice Renato Corona responding to criticism on the Supreme Court's recent decision to fight graft; case and allegations that it is a scuffling block to the Aquino administration's anti-corruption campaign

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
Roxas Boulevard corner Pedro Gil, Ermita, Manila

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM

INVITATION TO BID

PROCUREMENT OF THE GRADUATED ALL RISK POLICY INCLUDING MARINE HULL FOR FLYING BARGES, GAS EJECTOR AND SUPERVISION OF POWER SECTION BOAT TO LOLO TRANSMISSION CORPORATION (LTC)

The GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM (GSIS), through the GSIS Corporate Budget for CY 2011, wishes to receive bids for the PROCUREMENT OF POWER SECTION BOATS AND SUBSTATION EQUIPMENT CORPORATION (PSEBEC) INDUSTRIAL ALL RISK POLICY INCLUDING MARINE HULL FOR FLYING BARGES, GAS EJECTOR AND SUPERVISION as discussed hereinafter, ABC PhP1,764,705.88 with Two Hundred Twenty-Five Thousand Pesos (PhP225,000.00) VAT inclusive.

Item(s)	Total Premium Inclusive of GSIS Commission and Service Fee	Deductible (%)	Term/Validity
1. Location for Risks	Php 594,000,000.00	10%	365
2. Marine Hull for Flying Barges		10%	365
3. Machinery and Equipment		10%	365
4. Electrical Equipment (MB) and Gas Ejecting (M)		10%	365

Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at the opening.

Bidders should have issued, within two (2) years from the date of submission and receipt of bids, a contract similar to the Project. The description of an eligible contract is a contract as the Bidding Documents, particularly, in Section II Instructions to Bidders.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using a non-discretionary "pass/fail" criterion as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act (RA) 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act". Bidding is open to all interested bidders, whether local or foreign, subject to the conditions for eligibility provided in the IRR of RA 9184.

Interested bidders may inspect the Bidding Documents and obtain further information from the Joint Bidding Committee Secretariat, Remedios Encampment Lower 1, GSIS Building, Financial Center, Roxas Blvd., during office hours.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders on 03 February 2011 from the address mentioned above and upon payment of a non-refundable fee for the Bidding Documents in the amount of Php 1,000.00.

It may also be downloaded free of charge from the website of the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System (PhilGEPS) and the website of the GSIS, provided that Bidders must pay the non-refundable fee for the Bidding Documents not later than the submission of their bids.

The GSIS will hold a Pre-Bid Conference on 10:00 a.m. on 11 February 2011, 9:00 A.M. at the Remedios Lower 2, GSIS Building, Financial Center, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City, which shall be open to all interested parties who have purchased the Bidding Documents.

Bids must be delivered on or before 23 February 2011 (not 9:00 A.M. yet) at 10:30 A.M. at the JBC Secretariat, SMAC Conference Room Level C, GSIS Building, Financial Center, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City. All Bids must be accompanied by a sworn statement, in the form prescribed by the GSIS, that the bidder is not blacklisted or barred from bidding by any government agency.

Bid opening shall be on 23 February 2011 at 11:00 A.M. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' or their representatives who choose to attend at the SMAC Conference Room Level C, GSIS Building, Financial Center, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City. Late bids shall not be accepted.

The JBC encourages and prefers that the eligibility requirements be submitted before the deadline for the submission of the bids on or after the JBC through notification by the concerned committee, unless any deficiencies and for the deficiency cannot be determined before the deadline for the submission of bids.

The GSIS reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, to annul the bidding process and to reject all bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

For further information, please refer to:

MR. ROSTULO S. CORDERO, JR.
Head of the Joint Bidding Committee Secretariat
Remedios Encampment Lower 1, GSIS Building
Financial Center, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City
Contact no. 478-3501 or smacsecretariat@gsis.gov.ph

(ORIGINAL SIGNED)
CESAR V. PURISIMA
Secretary of Finance
Chairperson - Joint Bidding Committee

(PA - February 3, 2011)

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Iloilo Regional Office
Quintin Salas, Jaro, Iloilo City

NOTICE OF SALE OF IMPORTED RICE 25% BROKENS THRU PUBLIC AUCTION
REF. # RO6-11-AUC-01

The National Food Authority, Region VI, Brgy. Quintin Salas, Jaro, Iloilo City invites all interested NFA Licensed Grains Businessmen/Retailers/Investors to participate in the Sale through Public Auction of imported rice 25% brokens stored in Iloilo Sthwe, NFA, Region 6:

Warehouse	Warehouse	Variety	% Brokens	Volume in MT (more or less)	Minimum Bid Price
Iloilo	Ilaya	VICTORY	25%	8,804.00	P25.00/kg

The sale shall be on "as-is-where-is", "no selection basis". The offeror shall be required to post a bid bond equivalent to ten (10%) percent of the total amount offered in the form of cash, manager's or cashier's check payable to NFA, issued by a reputable commercial bank.

All interested participants are required to submit the following pre-qualification documents:

1. Letter of Intent (LOI)
2. Current and Valid Mayor's Permit
3. Certified photocopy of NFA Certificate of Registration/License
4. Special Power of Attorney (SPA) for single proprietorship or Board Resolution/Secretary's Certificate for corporation/cooperative for the authorized representative in transact with NFA for and in behalf of the owner.

Bid documents shall be issued only to bidders who have submitted the complete pre-qualification documents and paid the corresponding non-refundable and non-transferable fee of P2,000.00 for small retailers/farmers and P5,000.00 for wholesalers/traders.

The Pre-Auction Conference and the Submission and Opening of Bids shall be conducted at the NFA Conference Room, 2nd Floor, Iloilo Regional Office, Brgy. Quintin Salas, Jaro, Iloilo City on the following schedule:

Activities	1st Auction	Re-Auction	Re-Auction	Time
Issuance of bid doc.	Feb. 3-7, 2011	Feb. 8-10, 2011	Feb. 11-14, 2011	8:00 am-5:00 pm
Pre-Auction conference	Feb. 8, 2011	Feb. 11, 2011	Feb. 15, 2011	9:00 am
Bids Opening of Bids	Feb. 8, 2011	Feb. 11, 2011	Feb. 15, 2011	9:30 am

All interested bidders have the option to inspect the stocks at the warehouse on a regular working days from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm but drawing or taking out of samples is prohibited.

A re-auction shall be conducted at the same time and venue in case of failure of the previous bidding or the bid volume are not fully exhausted.

For further inquiries, you may contact the secretariat at telephone nos. (033) 329-2 460, (033) 329-6267.

NFA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, to waive any defects or formalities found therein and to annul the bidding process and reject all bids at any time prior to contract award without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders and to accept only such bids most advantageous to NFA.

(SGD) VILMA H. ZAMORA, MNSA
RFO/DM/CPC, Chairperson

(PA - February 3, 2011)

RN Heals a band-aid treatment for an ailing health care system

THIS IS in reaction to a news story circled "Nurses swamp POLE for food jobs." (Inquirer, 1/22/11)

There are about 300,000 unemployed nurses in the Philippines and 40,000 nurses are supposed to be added by June. Paying the desperation of nurses makes the jobs here considered, new types of "bantaysan," is shocking for me. Instead of the many training for jobs," nurses mentioned those just for work.

Thanks to the efforts of several health advocacy groups and the nursing community, this matter is being addressed by the Philippine Senate and other policymaking agencies of the government. I hope their response will not be another case of "tongue-in-cheek."

In rebuking the President Gloria Arroyo's NAIS (Nurses Assigned to Rural Areas) program from RN Heals (Registered Nurses for Health Enhancement And Land Service), the Aquino administration is admitting two realities. first, there is a high demand for the services of nurses in the Philippines; second, hundreds of poor communities in cities and rural areas do not have the services of professional health workers.

A study initiated by the Health Alliance for Democracy showed that over 60 percent of all patients that undergo medical treatment. This paints a picture of the state of our country's health system. The many of treaties is, our country has 300,000 jobless nurses yet Filipinos are dying from illnesses that are avoidable and preventable exams that there are no health workers to attend to their health needs. The "oversupply" of nurses is therefore a myth. There is no oversupply, the demand is overwhelming. It's just that there are no available jobs for nurses.

Is RN Heals the solution? Definitely not! This program is a palliative that will just paper over two major problems: unemployed/underemployed nurses, and our country's failed health care delivery system. What will happen after their six month assignment under RN Heals? Be jobless/out, the NAIS program, did not result in sustained positions in public hospitals in a substantial number of nurses. Will it turn into on the same template, how can it deliver a different result? RN Heals also ignores current provisions of the Nursing Act of 2002, specially those concerning wages and benefits of entry level nurses.

If the Aquino administration is to deal serious about addressing this matter, it should create more "plantilla" positions for nurses in our understaffed hospitals, build more rural health and medical centers, and aggressively employ thousands of unemployed health care providers to facilitate implementation. All the rhetoric about universal health care and strong national will be empty words unless they are translated into actions.

We don't need a superman for a president. What we need is a good leader. It's high time for a nationally relevant, economically independent nationalist leadership to appear.

—JEAN HERBERT VELUSCO, RN, Philippine Orthopedic Center, Maria Clara Street, Quezon City

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Mayor Binay erred in refusing to meet Robredo

NOW A senior citizen, a Makati resident for 37 years and registered voter as well, I am concerned that former Secretary Jesse Robredo and Makati Mayor Jejomar Erwin Sr. (Jejomar Cayetano Binay-Makati Mayor dawn," Inquirer, 1/21/11)

With due respect, Jejomar Jun Binay was ill-advised to have refused the secretary's Jan. 19 various inquiries for a meeting to "discuss and collaboratively find solutions to pressing peace and order issues." Only Robredo would know whether the request was made in connection with the theft of the car of Liberal Party president Jun Binay's cousin, if so, Robredo should resign from his present post and serve full time as DPs executive vice president and help prepare the party for the 2013 and 2016 elections. Or he can run his hands in the Magsaysay.

But Mayor Binay should have followed the example of his father, Vice President Jejomar Binay who is open to Roxas' appointment as a government position and promised to cooperate with him. The young mayor should have accommodated Secretary Robredo, by being up-front of the 37-year-old Makati resident and an alert age of President Aquino himself. And especially so considering the close personal ties between the Aquino and Binay families during back to the 1986 edsa days and Edsa I, Bobi tolo, as P-Noy's representative, deserves some courtesy if not hospitality, at least, which is a distinct Filipino trait.

Makati's Filipino drama, the unlike Makati's neighboring cities, is not votes driven. The last few months have witnessed several gory cases in the area, raising chaotic headlines on a scale not seen during his father's calm as mayor. The residents, by the way, dutifully reported these crimes to concerned authorities, by meeting Secretary Robredo, not mayor Jun could bring to him first hand the details. He was even denied an explanation for the relief of the police chief incharge previously assigned to the area.

Is politics rearing its ugly head here? Drastic changes in police leaders being sought for political reasons. And suddenly there is the Edsa Buendia bombing! After being spurned by the mayor, will the secretary still sincerely work with him? Aaaw with these jurisdictions and turf issues, no more finger-pointing, please! Let's get our act together and defer the fits weeks for 2013 and 2016!

—MANUELO. ROXAS,
Barangay Palanan,
Makati City

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION
Manila

[illegible]
-versus-
[illegible]
Respondent.

SUMMONS

[illegible]

(ORIGINAL SIGNED)
[illegible]
Natural City, Philippines, December 15, 2010

NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION

(PA - February 3, 2011)

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
CENTRAL OFFICE BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

Invitation to Bid
PROCUREMENT OF ANIMAL MEDIA PLACEMENT AND PRINTING OF VARIOUS IEC MATERIALS

1. The Department of Health (DOH), through the General Appropriations Act (GAA) CY 2011 intends to apply the sum for the following contract(s):

Lot No.	Name of Contract	ABC (PhP)	Non-Refundable Fee (PhP)
Lot 1	Procurement of Animal Media Placement for Television, Radio, Cinema, Internet, Outdoor and Print Media	10,000,000.00	10,000.00
Lot 2	Procurement of Printing of various IEC Materials	10,000,000.00	10,000.00

2. The DOH now invites bids from eligible bidders for the procurement of the above-named package. Delivery of the Services to the Central Office Warehouse as specified in Section VI. Schedule of Requirements of the Philippines. The Bid Capitalized Terms (BCT) mentioned herein shall have the same meanings as those ascribed to them under the Revised Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act (RA) 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act".

3. Bidding is open to all interested bidders, whether local or foreign, subject to conditions for eligibility provided in the Revised IRR of RA 9184.

4. Interested bidders may obtain further information from the Central Office Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below during office hours from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested bidders on 03 February 2011 from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee for the Bidding Documents in the amount of Php 1,000.00.

6. It may also be downloaded free of charge from the website of the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System (PhilGEPS) and the website of the DOH, provided that bidders must pay the non-refundable fee for the Bidding Documents not later than the submission of their bids.

7. The DOH will hold a Pre-Bid Conference on 10 February 2011, 10:00 A.M. at the Conference Room, Ground Floor, Building 2, DOH Compound, Sta. Cruz, Manila, which shall be open to all interested parties who have purchased the Bidding Documents.

8. Bids must be delivered on or before 23 February 2011 (not later than 9:00 A.M.). All bids must be accompanied by a sworn statement, in the form prescribed by the GSIS, that the bidder is not blacklisted or barred from bidding by any government agency.

9. Bid opening shall be on 23 February 2011 at 10:00 A.M. at the Conference Room, Ground Floor, Building 2, DOH Compound, Sta. Cruz, Manila. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' or their representatives who choose to attend at the address given below. Late bids shall not be accepted.

10. To maximize the participation of all interested bidders, the DOH reserves the right to accept, reject any bid, declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract at any time prior to contract award without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

11. For further information, please refer to:

ATTY. ROSTULO S. CORDERO, JR.
Head of the Joint Bidding Committee Secretariat
Remedios Encampment Lower 1, GSIS Building
Financial Center, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City
Contact no. 478-3501 or smacsecretariat@gsis.gov.ph

(ORIGINAL SIGNED)
CESAR V. PURISIMA
Secretary of Finance
Chairperson - Joint Bidding Committee

(PA - February 3, 2011)

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the environment of cities and places by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, City of Makati, or send a fax to 896-6700, 897-4799, or e-mail readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph. Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The letter itself will not be published, nor will we entertain such information is supplied.

need a job?

Merci: You talk too much; Leila: So unprofessional

By Nina Calleja and Marion Ramos

CAMBODIANIAN Maximilina Gutierrez yesterday chided Justice Secretary Leila de Lima for making "unprofessional" comments on the plea bargain forged by her office with plunder suspect Carlos Garcia.

"Mapahiyain ka at mag-isip ang dalawa nang dalawa (You get embarrassed and think twice and twice as much). Don't criticize us ... Kasi'to ibang unprofessional," Gutierrez said of De Lima during the weekly Sandaanlibong Boses at Dadalhing Pilipino in San Juan City.

Gutierrez's chief beef was with De Lima's comments on Garcia's statement about her performance as Cendrawasan and on the disparity in the bargain with Garcia.

"This is the problem with our justice secretary: she comments so fast without knowing what to really happening," Gutierrez said in Filipino.

Speaking later with reporters, De Lima said Gutierrez apparently did not know that irregularities in the use of public funds are an integral part of the plunder case filed against Garcia.

"If we have an ex-lawmaker who doesn't want to realize that public funds are involved, then we have a problem," De Lima said.

"I am sure the Ombudsman being assisted the plea bargaining agreement let it choose inquiry on Sunday? ... That's an unfortunate statement," she said.

As for Gutierrez's remarks against her earlier answering De Lima said: "It's part of my job. When I say those things, that's in accordance with my work also. I don't want to dignify statements like that. It's so unprofessional."

'We also get hurt'

Gutierrez said she had felt the need to air her side because of the criticisms being hurled at her.

"Of course, we also get hurt. But even if we are affected by all these accusations, we have to perform our job and do what is legal," she said.

Gutierrez said De Lima had no right to speak on the plea bargain because she was not the one handling the case.

"From the house leader then the prosecutors handling the case! If the does, then she must tell us and prosecute Garcia herself," Gutierrez said.

"In a justice secretary, De Lima should respect the decision of the court and the Ombudsman. We all deserve trust and respect," she said.

The removed former Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo and former Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio in praising the case to the anything-around-us.

"If I blamed Marcelo we did not do it right, I'm willing to appoint him as prosecutor in that he will have the authority and responsibility to pursue this case," she said.

The Ombudsman also said she had formed a panel of prosecutors to assess the latest evidence and the testimonies of former military budget officer George Rabusa and former state auditor Heidi Mendoza.

"The prosecutors will be asking Rabusa to submit his official statement. We will give weight to his claims," she said.

Use letter of Garcia's wife

De Lima questioned Gutierrez's statement at the House hearing that it was difficult for the government to pursue the plunder case because the military commanders in the criminal information were already dead.

It's as John and Juan Does.

She said the prosecutors could have refiled the letter of Garcia's wife Cecilia when she opted to retrieve the $100,000 that 321 customs officials had solved from their vaults at a San Francisco airport.

"And it is the statement of Mrs. Garcia, she was referring to Andy Sachs? Kichbachs pinagpuwa publ-

ic funds, and until most cases before the Ombudsman about public funds?" De Lima said. "Did [the prosecutors] even know that they have to present public funds?"

De Lima said Mercado was right when he said that Cecilia Garcia's letter could be used as evidence against her husband because she was a co-conspirator.

Ex-tradition withdrawn

She said the Ombudsman could have requested US authorities to extradite Garcia's wife to force her to stand on trial.

"Why aren't they working on the extradition proceedings? It's really frustrating that according to the US legal attache, the withdrawal of extradition proceedings was included in the plea bargain agreement," De Lima lamented.

Superstorms roar across US, Australia

From page A1

the Great Barrier Reef. (See story on this page.)

The system that stretched more than 1,25 9 km from Texas to Maine, across a third of the United States, prompted in Denver to its aftermath a chilly dose of tooth-chattering cold, with temperatures in the single digits or lower.

Winds topped 96.56 kph in Texas. In Chicago, public schools called a snow day for the first time in 12 years, and O'Hare airport's gate up on flying until at least Wednesday afternoon.

Storm to remember

Thousands of office workers in Chicago's famous downtown Loop district left early to avoid any snow troubles.

The storm also led Chicago officials to close the city's busy and iconic Lake Shore Drive after numerous accidents that stranded motorists and buses for several hours.

City officials said the move was temporary but that they could have to close it again if high winds push 7.62-m waves from nearby Lake Michigan over the roadway.

Everyone "should brace for a storm that will be remembered for a long time," said Jose Santiago, executive director of Chicago's office of emergency management.

Many cities across middle America began shutting down hours ahead of the snow. Scores of schools, colleges and government offices canceled activities or decided not to open at all.

10,000 flights canceled

Large sections of busy Midwest interstate highways were closed, and more than 10,000 flights had been canceled across America.

Early arrivals initiated many people already planned to head all-nite to stay home.

In Missouri, more than a foot of snow had fallen by midday, with no end in sight. For the first time in history, the state of Missouri shut down Interstate 70 between St. Louis and Kansas City due to a winter storm.

"The roads are just pure white. There's no traffic. Nothing," said Brad Stanley, who was working at Clinton Discount Building Materials in Clinton, Missouri.

In states captain across the Midwest and East, lawmakers cut short their workweek because of the storm. Normally bustling downtown streets were quiet, with many stores were closed, with signs on the windows blaming the weather.

Meteorologist Jeff Johnson of the National Weather Service in Des Moines, Iowa, said the storm was one to "cripple transportation for a couple of days." The snow and high wind were a dangerous combination, even in areas where not much snow was expected.

"You don't want to get caught out in the road areas in your vehicle in this storm. It's a good night to stay home," he said.

First time in history

The leading edge of the storm slammed first into Texas and Ohio home after moving out of the Rockies.

The blizzard halted production of the print edition of Wednesday's Tidal Herald, marking the first time in the paper's nearly 106 year history that the nor publish an edition.

Both Oklahoma's major airports were closed, and the state called the National Guard to help rescue workers search for stranded motorists.

Gonzalo Tobar, at the Hard Rock Casino, the snow caused the partial collapse of a roof, but no injuries were reported.

In Texas, thousands of people lost electricity during the frigid conditions. Utility company Oncor reported more by 27,000 customers without power statewide, with nearly half of the outages in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Winter-weary

The storm was expected to roll in to the Northeast on Wednesday bringing with more snow to a winter weary region. Towns that have been hit by several blizzards already this winter feared they wouldn't have anywhere to put more snow. AP

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Juana Change spoofs P-Noy Porsche purchase

From page A2

respond to everybody who criticizes the President.

"I haven't seen (the video) and I don't care," Cassidong told reporters when asked about the video uploaded that has turned viral and runny Juana Change.

In the video (that at press time had been viewed more than 5,000 times), Juana Change, whose real name is Mae Paner, was chatting with four people—a male student, a female nurse, an old woman and a male professional—waiting excitedly for Mr. Aquino to arrive by with his new Porsche.

Paner then asked the others why they were not affected by the purchase of the luxury car. She was told that the President after all used his own money to acquire the car, which they pointed out was the Grand.

They also told her that they did not mind because Mr. Aquino did say he needed the car to do things himself from the heavy burdens of the presidency.

When she heard that the car was "third hand," Paner replied in Filipino: "Whatever its third hand or second hand, ang gawa'ng iba'ng hand ng pinoy" (it's still of production and that we say that this country comes first before himself."

Lead neediest lives

Nearing this, the male student in the skit cited a provision in the law that required public officials to "lead neediest lives."

He quoted section 36 of Republic Act No. 6713 or the Code of Ethical Standards for Public Officials: "Public officials and employees and their families shall lead modest lives appropriate to their positions and income. They shall not indulge in extravagance or conspicuous display of wealth in any form."

The skit then showed Paner and the four calling on Mr. Aquino to give them a lift as he drove down the road. But the President (complete with a supermarket image of Mr. Aquino) drove away without stopping, his car speeding most of the group.

Who's Juana?

JUANA CHANGE is play on Wanna Change, want to change) is a character that rose to cyber-fandom through her political satires uploaded on YouTube, the free video-sharing site. Juana Change is played by theater actress and video producer Mae Paner.

A group of creative artists, advocates, activists and communicators in the field, among whom The Convergence Team, developed Juana Change and filmed short "viralt" videos that have become an Filipinos.

The group now goes by the name Artists Revolution (https://artistsrevolution.ph/Juana Change.html) and includes members such as TV commercial director Soxie Topacio, Web-presidential producer Raymond Lee and musicians Jim Paredes.

Paner uploaded the first video in December 2008, which garnered 20,000 views in just a matter of days. Most of the Juana Change videos are geared on the political scandals making the country, such as Chavit's charge, the scandals during the Arroyo administration, and the plight of overseas Filipino workers.

Paner served as an Aquino campaign volunteer in July, she expressed her dismay with the new administration's appointment of members of the Abad family in various posts in the government. She said the Aquino administration needed new faces instead of recycled ones, and that the appointments smacked of conflict of interest. Inquirer Research

The skit ended with all four taking a peek and calling for the need to "Pedi-Philippines."

When reporters cornered Cassidong and asked what he thought of the video of Paner, he said: "I cannot speculate on her mental state. She says she's a supporter then you hear that so-to-say in short e... We don't know where ... what her perspective is right now."

But he said somebody has the right to criticize the President and that the Palace would respect their position.

Still for President

In a phone interview with the inquirer, Paner said she and her Juana Change advocacy team "were and still are for the President."

Paner said the earlier agreed with Mr. Aquino that she would not poll any surprises.

She said she informed the President beforehand that she was coming out with the video, which she uploaded on YouTube the other day.

Concern

"The message is that is there is a hint of concern," Paner said. "We want to remind the President that he has to be sensitive to his constituents."

She said that Mr. Aquino had said that he was a "simple person" and that they wanted him to keep that "image."

Paner said she did not think the President did the right thing in buying the expensive car when the country was suffering from rising prices and transportation costs—things that she did point out in her video.

Get rid of car

She said She was the first video she had put out since Mr. Aquino became president and now she added this was the first time she directly hit him on an issue.

Paner said she would continue to come out with videos because while she helped in campaigning for him in the May 2010 elections and supported his campaign for change, her obligation did not stop there.

She said she hoped the President "will get rid of the car."

"In Gorumbong and his "I don't care" statement about her video. Pero at least this to say: "If you don't care, we care for this administration."

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SPORTS

Azkals get midfield boost, higher ranking

By Cedelf P. Tupas

DE JONG

PHILIPPINE FOOTBALL standout Jason de Jong arrived in Barcelona yesterday, boosting the national squad's midfield line a month before the Azkals face Mongolia in the first leg of their AFC Challenge Cup qualifying series.

As a defensive midfielder, De Jong, who plays for Mendizorroza in the Dutch second division, played a key role in the Azkals' run to the AFF Suzuki Cup semifinals last December.

His early arrival comes as a boost for the Azkals, who will take Chris Greatwich for the Mongolia clash because of the midfielder's work commitments in the United States.

Greatwich is actually suspended for Mongolia match because of his red card in the second leg of the semifinals of the Suzuki Cup against Indonesia. He scored two goals in the group stage of the Suzuki Cup.

Simon Greatwich, Chris' younger brother, and Ricardo Rocha started as midfield for the Azkals in their 4-4 draw with Angeles Cordillera in a friendly last Monday.

The Azkals are slowly finding their feet under new Serbian coach Ilsan Michael Weise and a match against an Iloilo-based Korean side at the Panaad today should provide another score test.

"The team needs as many matches as possible now to find its rhythm," said Edwin Cuasay, Weise's local assistant.

The Philippines will enter the Feb. 9 match as the 192nd ranked team in the world, 39 places above Mongolia.

The Azkals, who limped into the top 150 for the first time in history before losing ground in January, moved up one place in the latest ranking released by the International Football Federation.

The other members of the squad like Neil Etheridge, Rob Gier and Stay Austin are arriving on Saturday night and will join the squad in Barcelo on Feb. 6.

The 20-year-old Etheridge was hoping to arrive earlier for the clash, but he is expected to be listed in the Wolfsburg squad for the English Premiere League match against Newcastle United.

Gier plays alongside skipper Aly Borromeo in central defense, while Austrians, who plays top flight football in Ireland, is one of the most reliable left fullbacks the country has had in years.

While the Azkals underwent a two-week camp in Barcelo, Mongolia will only be allowed two days to get used to the weather in the country.

The Mongolians, who reportedly trained in China, are scheduled to arrive Feb. 7. They will host the second leg of the qualifying series on March 17 in Ulanbatar.

Texters seize key 3-2 edge

By Mussing R. Carcilla

SAN Miguel Beer's Sunday Salvacion (back) hails Talk 'N Text Jimmy Alapag in the first half of their game last night.

DILIMAN, Quezon City—Talk 'N Text bounced back in a big way last night, and in a rather personalized fashion in a best-of-three, earned the all-important edge in semifinal one and winning chances.

Playing with sustained brilliance and intensity the whole game, the Tropang Texters whipped the San Miguel Beermen, 99-77, for a 3-2 lead in their best-of-seven title series for the PBA Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

Jimmy Alapag came off the bench to shoot 16 points, hauled out 10 assists and runs a triple-double by just three rebounds to line up the Texters, who played their most impressive game.

Talk 'N text can clinch the crown with a victory in Game 6 on Friday.

"It doesn't matter who starts," Alapag said repeatedly later on. "The bottom line is we win together as a group."

After being held to a season-low 14 points in a quarter in the opening period, the Texters fired away at will while the Brothers's high-profile offensive machine kept firing blanks to highlight the series' shift in momentum.

"Of course we are very happy," Talk 'N Text coach Chot Reyes said. "But as far as I am concerned, that (game) was the first ball. We came into this session ready to play 96 hard minutes.

"We are halfway there and we need to find a way to put together another good 48 minutes on Friday," added Reyes, whose squad posted a 27-point lead late in the fourth.

"We were focused, we rebounded and ran smoked and it clearly showed that they (Texters) seemed a more today," San Miguel coach Ato Agustin told reporters in Filipino. "The result showed it."

Asmiel Gamot and Jay Washington scored 18 points each and had 11 and 12 rebounds, respectively for the Beermen, who certainly chose the wrong time to slip back into their sloppy ways in the first two games.

After shooting just nine points in an 87-93 Game 4 loss, Alapag had three-three pointers in the second period, which ballooned a 22-10 lead to help the Texters log their biggest scoring quarter in the tournament (28 points).

TALK 'N TEXT 99—Ilanan 16, Castro 11, Asoro 11, Reyes 10, Ellis 9, Cruz 8, Williams 8, Lanby 7, Mallari 6, Alapag 5, Cagulangan 4, Pinto 0, Salvador 0, Ayaay 0, Ibanes 0, Andrews 0, Ebarle 0, Cabagnot 0, Gamot 0, Gabriel 0, Sanchez 0.
Quarters: 14-32, 32-42, 71-62, 99-77

PSC wants unified list of national cyclists

By Jane Navarro

CEBU: UP with a joint list of cyclists who will compete in the Southeast Asian Games.

Philippine Sports Commissioner Ruel Garcia proposed this yesterday to the trio cycling governors of Cebu, Negros Occ. and Agusan Del Norte Gwen Garcia and Philip Ella Juico so the riders and their coaches can regain the national pool.

"They should come up with a list acceptable to both parties, submit it to the PSC and assure us that the athletes in the list will compete in the SEA Games," quoted Pia Cayetano.

Garcia said the government sports agency would then move to reinstate the athletes and coaches in the monthly payroll of the PSC.

Tolentino, president of the Philippine cycling recognized by the world governing body Union Cyclists Internationale, appealed to the governors for the "temporary" release of the athletes from the leadership crisis besetting the sport.

Tolentino wants agency to ensure the allowance of the national riders and coaches after the PSC had issued a resolution suspending their financial assistance effective Jan. 31 until the leadership problem is settled.

"I'm saddened by the plight of the national cyclists, but it's the decision of the (PSC) board," said Garcia.

"Until the conflicting groups assure that the athletes can compete in the SEA Games, the PSC resolution remains in effect," he added.

Tolentino said the deadline for submission for cycling to the 2009 Southeast Asian Games in Laos but the 12 riders failed to compete due to their failure to secure their license from the UCI.

"We've just preserving the cyclists. We don't want the 2009 SEA Games incident to happen again," said Garcia.

Tolentino suggested that the PSC donate the qualified riders but Garcia said it was tantamount to government intervention because it was not PSC's mandate to conduct a tryout and choose the athletes.

AGUILAR

Aguilar staying with Smart Gilas squad

All PBA as Smart Gilas is concerned, Japeth Aguilar remains a vital piece to the national team's buildup to the Fiba Asia Championship.

Smart Gilas team manager Franlin Calayan said the 6-foot-9 forward will play for the Philippines in the coming PBA Commissioner's Cup starting Feb. 16, quelling talks that Aguilar is out of the team for good.

Aguilar is recuperating from a knee injury he suffered before the Guangzhou Asian Games last year.

The injury prevented the 2009 PBA top rookie pick from joining Smart Gilas in the recently-concluded Doha International where the national five finished second.

"He will play for us in the 50th second conference. That's for sure," said Lim.

Aguilar, who suited up for NCAA Division I Ateneo Bentahan University, was acquired by Talk 'N Text in a controversial trade that Aug21 two years ago.

The Tropang Texters then loaned the son of former Gilas'ers stalwart Peter Aguilar to Smart Gilas which is gearing up for the Fiba Asia Championship in Wuhan, China, on Sept. 11 to 25 where the winner will make it to the 2012 London Olympics.

When PH head coach Eddie Tomeno included Aguilar in the Doha pool, many rumors began to circuit that Smart Gilas had used Aguilar by handing him backto Talk 'N Text.

"I tell Japeth only to make work Talk 'N Text while we're in Gilas. He will still report (to Talk) and he will play for us in the PBA," said Tomeno.

Smart Gilas got the green light from the PBA to see action in the 2011 league after Rambo Ball filed a temporary leave.

Palanan stays in semis race

PALANAN ELEMENTARY School scored an unbeaten straight-set romp over Claret School, 25-13, 25-12, to maintain its hold on the other berth in the crossover semifinal round of the first Sibly's Juniors Volleyball League at Ugong gym last Sunday.

The team ruled the Philippine women's varsity thrones at 2-1, making their 9th, 13 duel a deciding match for the second and last semifinal seat in Pool B of the boys division.

Concepcion Elementary School clinched the first semifinal slot with a four-game sweep in the tournament sponsored by Sibly's lipstick.

In La Salle Liga, meanwhile, advanced in the girls' semifinals with a 25-19, 22-8 romp over Miriam College, completing its four-game sweep of Pool A side of the event backed by Shakey's, LBC, Milkies and Asics.

Miriam dropped out of the race with a 1-3 card.

St. Mary's Academy outlasted Academy of God's Children in a tightly fought match in boys' Pool B with the former banking out a tough 25-19, 25-23 victory for its first win against two losses.

AGC fell to 0-3.

Elizabeth Seton dumped St. Mary's Academy-Tahoom, 25-11, 25-11, for a 1-3 card while shutting the latter to fourth straight loss in girls' Pool B.

Yes, 'B' boxers in dime-a-dozen SEA Games

BABE EYE

Rizcelo Trinidad

Boxing competitions

Maybe mind the championships, with talented Raphael and Miguel Adonis, offspring of Barcelona Olympian Roberto, bagging their share of the gold host early.

Wherein Oriental's predictable arsenal is known, but there were silver or worthy gold medal winners from Zamboanga, Davao del Norte, Tagbilaran, Baguio City and Davao del Sur.

The well-spread medals attested to the vibrant direction amateur boxing has taken following the change of leadership in the Abap.

As could only be expected, a new batch of young national team trainees will be called from among the top performers in the filial's championships.

Come was the six of mediocrity, when the weeding of failed international boxers was the main thrust in the national amateur boxing backyard.

Anyway, as soon as he was done assuming the medals and paying the referees, Abap executive director Ed Picson was asked by this corner this nagging question on why only Our "B" boxers will be campaigning in Indonesia.

There was no immediate reply. Picson instead asked for a few minutes.

* * *

Soon enough, there was Abap executive secretary Pato Gregorio, also the Batuli sports director, and the head this reply from Ricky Vargas, the national boxing association president.

It's head, fists and forward-looking:

"Sir, will send our best boxers (all-time) representing our Olympic dream. Our boxers for the SEA Games are there to win the gold for our country. Cheers!"

Vargas is sticking to his guns.

He will proceed with what he feels is best for both the Olympic and Southeast Asian Games campaigns.

* * *

Not a simple dangling proposition but the maneuver could also be too close double-edged to others.

For example: Why not Class 'B' boxers in the SEA Games?

Well, it's not really a case of the country's top strongmen being overqualified for the SEA Games, which has also been associated with lowly sporting standards.

It's just that sending top Filipino Olympic boxing hopefuls to the Indon Games this year would be a step backward in the country's quest for its first Olympic gold medal.

Baby Vargas didn't say it, but he surely knows the right thing to do to expose our Olympic aspirants to truly tough, exacting bouts.

* * *

This is not to say the SEA Games has become completely irrelevant, but those who know honest, genuine sports development swear that staging away from a mediocre field to one sure step toward excellence.

For one, the SEA Games, unlike the more grueling Asiad, Goi Bansipag the years did into a biennial fiesta, an exotic excursion attended by self-styled sports leaders who go for easy pop points in order to justify their bureaupretense.

You can't expect to score in the Olympics by just competing in a lowly, mediocre pool where medals are a dime-a-dozen.

2 middle leagues for PH basketball

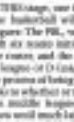
AFTER a stage, one dungeon-time Philippine basketball will have two middle leagues: The PBL, which has regrouped with six teams initially lined in to active roster, and the PBA's development league or D-League, which is still in the process of being formed.

So as whether or not there's room for two middle leagues, we won't really know until much later.

Interestingly, both leagues are vying nearly are so near-term match.

* * *

IN HUDDLE



Beth Cielo

"We've scheduled the PBL opening for March 5. On Saturday, Feb. 5, we are holding the rookie draft. The reorganized six-year conference is open to rookies born 1984 or later but each team is allowed to hire two players born no earlier than 1983. In other words, the player should not be older than 26 when the conference starts," Cobalt's Lawrence Chong, son, designated head of the group, texted from Hong Kong.

He said the six teams will play three elimination rounds, all at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium: double-headers on Thursdays and triple headers on Saturdays.

The six teams are Spit Nuttars Inc. (ASE), Hobe Sibon, Sandoval Cold Fritos, Pharon and Colon Energy Inc.

* * *

On the other hand, the D-League which was officially given the go-signal by the PBA board only last week, has 13 teams knocking on its door.

"Hendon, Mayeldad, Bonevado which will be represented by the University of the Philippines Maroons, Pacific Pipes, Harbin Institute of Technology, a hallelujah assisted by the elder Lambert Romeo and Hermie Esguerra, Lhuillier (Hinhal or Jean Henry or both) and two others whose company names cannot be revealed as of now," PBA media bureau head Willie Marcial added of the proposed members of the D-League, whose number is expected to increase in the next few weeks.

If you want my opinion, I'm all for having two middle leagues. It will mean more employment for players, coaches and utility users.

* * *

Whether or not Pacific head Go Teng Kok is still in good standing with PBA president Peping Cojuangco, we should know very soon.

If GTK remains president of the Philippine Basketball Association despite being ousted by 14 of the 16 regional directors, then it could only mean that he continues to be Peping's boy.

However, if Peping gives the thumbs up to the resolution filed by the PBA to remove GTK, then we can conclude that GTK has fallen out of the PDC head's good graces. (Is that said the resolution is invalid—Editor)

Although the PBA's constitution and by-laws clearly forbid its top officials to hold a position in another national sports association, GTK has managed to hold office both as PBA and Pasaka president for the past three years.

He has said the provision was evolved to pave the way for his every—Editor)

If the PDC received any complaints and protests to the pool, it has been easy to look the other way.

Anyway, the word that can hopefully to GTK is that he will still have one NBA left to bend. If ever, this is the time to do it because this may happened to him. Some years back, he also resigned as Pasaka and Philippine Chess Federation head at the same time.

Blazers torch Spurs behind Aldridge

KOBE Bryant (middle) gets hemmed in while taking a jump shot. —

PORTLAND, OREGON—LaMarcus Aldridge had a career-high 46 points along with 21 rebounds to power the Portland Trail Blazers to a 99-89 win over NBA-leading San Antonio on Tuesday.

Gary Neal's 3-pointer for San Antonio made it 76-78, but Aldridge's layup and Wesley Matthews's scoop gave Portland its biggest lead of the game to that point at 81-76 with 7:00 left.

It was the first game of the Spurs' "Rodeo Road Trip," the team's annual 7-game rodeo in home stadium hosts the San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo. The next stop on the rainy-game trip is the highly anticipated matchup with the defending NBA champion Los Angeles Lakers on Thursday.

Tiago Splitter had 14 points for the Spurs, who have won eight straight this season.

In Los Angeles, the Lakers cruised narrowly avoided a rare third straight home loss, edging the Houston Rockets, 114-106, in overtime.

Kobe Bryant scored 32 points while Pau Gasol for the go-ahead layup with 1:04 left in regulation and finished with 20 points and 16 rebounds.

The two-time defending NBA champions finished their first overtime of the season on a 10-2 run, barely holding off injury-plagued Houston.

Luis Scola hit a tying layup with 1.5 seconds left in regulation for the Rockets, who later has three straight, thirteen-launched a season-high 38 3-point attempts, but made just 13.

In Sacramento, Ray Allen scored 22 points as the Boston Celtics overcame a slow start to get past the Kings, 95-86.

Rajon Rondo had 19 points and 10 assists as the Celtics pulled away in the fourth quarter and clinched the Eastern Conference's best record through games of Feb. 6. Paul Pierce, Boston's Doc Rivers will coach the East in the All-Star game in Los Angeles on Feb. 20.

In New Orleans, the Hornets dropped Washington, 93-87, as Chris Paul had 19 points in a 97-89 defeat that sent the Wizards sliding closer to the worst-ever start in league history.

Jamal Crawford scored a career-high 20 points in a rare starting role while Chris Duhon had 15 points and nine assists for New Orleans.

Crawford was starting for center Emeka Okafor, whose collapse on the tennis kept him out for the first time in 306 games. AP

Pacman's next fight likely in S'pore

By Reuven Hechanova

AFTER FESTIVE Shane Mosley in Las Vegas on May 7, pound-for-pound king Manny Pacquiao may stage his next world title fight in Singapore.

Pacquiao's adviser, Michael Koncz, told the Inquirer that he and Bernie Ilar Cam (aka "Uzbek" Shapiro) had recently "met with a group of influential business people" about the possibility of holding Pacquiao's next fight in Singapore.

Koncz said the deal was almost 90 percent done and they should have a final word by the end of the week. Koncz said no date was agreed upon since it would depend on how the fight against Mosley at the MGM Grand goes.

Koncz said "if it's a different fight then Mosley rematch (probably fight in November) or if it's a short fight and Mosley is by an early knockout it could be multi-contest."

The fight maybe held in one of the two new casino complexes in Singapore, Koncz added.

Singapore's two casinos—Reuven World Resorts and Marina Bay Sands—have enticed the government a combined $6-billion-worth of time they opened in late February and April, respectively.

A Singaporean boxing promoter, John Leong, is also working to have Pacquiao's next fight held at the Singapore Indoor Stadium.

Leong, league the highly anticipated welterweight title fight between Dondon Nonito Donaire and Australian Eddie "Hayabusa" Delle last week. Italian won by a unanimous 12-round decision.

PACQUIAO

Montiel training hard for Donaire bout

By Reuven Hechanova

A PHOTO e-mailed by the WBC to the Inquirer shows Fernando Montiel doing pumps in training.

WBC AND WBO bantamweight champion Fernando "El Chubby" Montiel is training extra hard for his title defense against Nonito "The Filipino Flash" Donaire at the Mandaluyong Bay Resort Hotel in San Rojas in Feb. 19.

Montiel has an impressive record of 44-0-2 with 36 knockouts and is regarded as a far more experienced fighter than Donaire, who sports a record of 20-1 with 17 knockouts.

Both fighters have predicted they would have great shape-on-fight night and the boor wouldn't go the distance.

Montiel himself said it will end in a knockout either way although Donaire sees confident his speed and power would be too much for the Mexican.

Montiel, who improved his record with a stunning 4th round TKO over Japan's highly-ranked southpaw Hozumi Hasegawa to win the WBC title, is being trained by his father Manuel.

Boxing writer Jong Hubber quoted Manuel as pointing out that Donaire "is a tremendous counter puncher who will use his speed to try to stop one of Fernando's power punches."

Manuel said they are making sure Fernando understands that in order to win this fight he needs to put pressure on Donaire and throw a lot of punches.

Montiel, who retained his WBO super flyweight title against J. "The Dynamite" Guerrero in a controversial decision in Cebu City on February 2009, will be known his clash with Donaire "is a very dangerous fight."

SPORTSWATCH

San Beda College's Red & White golf tourney today

THE SAN Beda College High School Class of 1986 in cooperation with the SBC Alumni Association, will stage the Red & White Golf Tournament today at the Alabang Country Club.

The tournament is co-sponsored by Senator Jinggoy Estrada, with Fernando Lim and Mike Arugay as High School Deans of 1986 as chair and co-chair, respectively.

Media partners are the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Jam 88.3, Wave 89.1, Magic 89.9, 98.5 RT, and 903.5 Aksyon Radyo.

Fraternity President Fidel V. Ramos, Thomas Dewey of Hospital Equipment, Mayor Jaime Cabauatan-MBDM president, and Senator Ilan Enrile of the SBCA Board for the commemorative shots.

Top jins vying in Smart CPJ

THE COLUMBIAN'S board juniors will vie for supremacy in the Philippine leg of the 2011 to the Smart Gilas Pilipinas Asian Basketball Confederation championships on Feb. 6 at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

"The best basketball will display their talents and skills in this prestigious tournament," said Philippine Basketball Association commissioner Noli Eala.

Around 150 jins are also expected to show their stuffin the opening and closing ceremonies of the tournament sponsored by Smart Communications Inc., PLDT, Bto and the Philippine Sports Commission.

Senior, junior and grade school entries may vie in either or both categories while juniors events will be scheduled in three categories.

Batangas racing strip hosts drag race

THE COUNTRY'S finest drivers and their versatility as the 2011 National Drag Racing Championships stages the kickoff at the Southern Tagalog Expo, 5 at the Batangas Racing Circuit Brgy. Sto. Tomas in Batangas.

A big field is expected as drag racers from the south are to show their stuff against their northern rivals in this event supported by Yokohama Philippines, Chequered Flag, Racing Boots Wear, 88.1 FM, Aerosteel, and sanctioned by the Automobile Association Philippines.

Pat Mercado and her battling for the crowns in the previous Pro-class, Sportsman and Hobbyist divisions.

They will attempt to challenge Jonathan Tee's winning track record of 9.000 seconds at the BRC Drag Strip.

Race director Fil Guillen urges participants to come early for the qualifying race before the drivers briefing slated at 8 a.m.

Tiong Lian hoops: St. Stephen's trips St. Jude

ST. STEPHEN'S High School topped last year's runner-up St. Jude Catholic School, 80-58, in the Tiong Lian Basketball Association Tuesday at the CSSC Gym.

The Stephenians closed out their campaign in the annual tournament with seven wins in 11 games—thanks in part to rookie Don Ramos and Sr. Justice Mark Ong with 13 rebounds.

The St. Stephen victory also means that the order for a replay between the game of Dasma Int. High College and St. Jude has been withdrawn since it would will no longer affect the standings.

Kent Lee had 16 points and 10 rebounds for SSHS to win the Stonga Player of the Game award.

Father Chiong Kui Shek posted in eighth win in 11 games by downing Great Christian College, 84-80.

Despite their defeat, the Jaguarines claimed the last semifinal berth, joining three-time defending champion Xavier, Chiong Kui Shek College and Hope Christian High in the final phase.

HERMENEGILDO and the coaching staff of the University of Perpetual Help volleyball team celebrate their NCAA victory

Altas claim NCAA volley men's, juniors' crowns

UNIVERSITY of Perpetual Help posted a twin kill in the 86th NCAA volleyball championship, bagging the men's and boys volleyball championship recently.

The Altas retained their men's crown after defeating defenders, 25-15, 25-18, 25-16, 25-18, in Game 2 to sweep their best-of-three affair at 9:00 El Pilipino V Arena in San Juan City.

The former Altas, on the other hand, humbled San Sebastian Staglets, 25-16, 25-15, 25-15, to also close out their championship duel.

John Eric Pantoleon was named MVP of the juniors tournament, with teammates Dion Bagabe (best server) and Lenie Chavez (best chipper) also winning individual awards. Dorne Chavez was named MVP of the men's tournament.

Fabulous
nights.

8

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Editor Abelardo B. Manalay

DID YOU KNOW

National Artist for Theater and Film Lamberto Avellana was born in the Year of the Rabbit. Born on Feb. 22, 1910, he was the first Filipino filmmaker to have his films shown at the Cannes International Film Festival.
Joseph Dandin Aquino Vincent

Hunt on for suspects in robbery-slay case

By Jayson T. Sanci

HOMICIDE investigators of the Manila Police District (MPD) have asked the public to help them track down the main suspects in the killing of a 31-year-old Smart Communications Inc. employee.

Yesterday the police released a picture of the victim, Albert Clarence Bondoc, with two young men. There was a bottle and a pitcher in front of the group, indi-

ALBERT Clarence Bondoc (left) and the two main suspects in his death.

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11 am – 2pm
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The Plaza at Newport Mall

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Lion Dance Parade
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Raps eyed vs 11 cops in Navy man's death

By Tina G. Santos

THE PNP&F City police have recommended the filing of criminal and administrative charges against 11 members of the Philippine National Police's Aviation Security Group (PNP-AVSEG) in connection with the death of a US Navy officer who reportedly committed suicide following his arrest for drug possession at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 1 last year.

Pasay police chief, Senior Supt. Napoleon Campos, recommended the filing of charges of negligence resulting in homicide against SPO1 Roberto Paguntan, SPO1 Mateo Aguilar, Police Officers 3 Apolonio and Noel Libreluz and PO1 Jaime Zerdueta for their failure to take action which may have prevented victim Lt. Cmdr. Scimir Mejia from killing, jumping or pushing himself to death on Dec. 27, 2010.

Campos also recommended the conduct of a pre-charge evaluation to determine the administrative liabilities of the five policemen and their six other colleagues, namely, Chief Insp. Norberto Gombio Jr., SPO1 Melquiades Morano, PO2 Mark Anthony Gobuyan, Police Officers 2 Marwin Bumidis and Dennis Marquez and PO1 Emmanuel Ponce.

The case after they "were found sleeping or failing to have properly performed their respective duties and responsibilities when Mejia was apprehended and placed under custodial investigation" at the Police Center for Aviation Security (PCAS).

A report by the airport police showed that Mejia, 35, a Filipino-American citizen, jumped headfirst into a stairwell on the second floor of the PCAS building.

A day before his death, airport policemen accosted him at the airport pre-departure area for carrying a backpack and after an X-ray check of his hand-carried bag showed a tablet that contained a white powdery substance.

Mejia, who held a US diplomatic passport, was then about to board a Philippine Airlines flight bound for Los Angeles.

When he was asked about the contents of the tablet, he went into hysterics and threw the note in question at the opposite of the X-ray machine. He claimed that he was being framed.

Mejia was subsequently taken to the PCAS office for questioning. On Monday morning, he asked to go to the toilet. While being escorted there by handcuffs, he ran off and jumped into a stairwell. He fell headfirst from a height of at least 10 feet.

An autopsy showed that Mejia had sustained a deep wound and a rib fracture, injuries he did not have before an attempt was made to revive him.

METROBRIEFS

Relocation eyed for fire victims

SOME 500 families who lost their homes in a fire that killed 13 people in Barangay Culiat may be relocated, Mayor Joy Belmonte said Wednesday as she inspected the site of the blaze.

Belmonte said the city government already is looking for suitable sites that could permanently house the displaced families who were temporarily staying at San Roque High School. She added, however, that they would first have to secure clearance to return those back to Barangay San Roque, the area would have to be improved. She said that an alley, the only pathway leading to the area, would have to be widened to make it easy for residents to enter or leave the barangay. "We do not want a repeat of the tragedy," Belmonte said. By the end of the week, the fire victims will be temporarily transferred to a transitional court from across the school to allow classes to resume in the school's covered court.

Jeordan Felimon Mangunay

Teen stabs girlfriend

POLICE are looking at jealousy as a possible motive for the killing of a 17-year-old girl during a birthday bash for students on Tuesday night in Pasay City. Michelle Jamyka Bellomoy, a student of St. Paul University Manila, was allegedly killed by her boyfriend Cristofer Van Mendoza, 18, inside the latter's house on Tramo Street, Barangay 76, where he was declared dead on arrival at the Pasay City General Hospital due to multiple stab wounds. Case investigator PO2 Giovanni Antonio said the victim sustained at least 18 stab wounds. Duncan reportedly left the party with the couple on her friends, police said. Initial investigation showed that Mendoza's younger brother rushed to the barangay hall when his sister, who works at the barangay executive office, was having a meeting. He reported that his brother had stabbed the victim during a heated argument. Mendoza fled while the victim was being taken to the hospital.

David Santos

89 trucks cited for overloading

By Jerome Aning

ON TO first day of implementing the anti-overloading law, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) apprehended the drivers of 89 trucks for violating the Motor Vehicle User's Charge (MVUC) Law.

On Tuesday, DPWH personnel inspected 347 trucks to see if their axle load was above the 13,000 kilograms per axle or gross limit and allowable compound gross vehicle weight.

Under the MVUC, trucks that are overloaded are prohibited from using national roads and bridges.

The 89 violators represented about 18 percent of the 347 trucks that went through 14 weighing stations located on major national roads in Illocos Manila and nearby provinces, the DPWH said in a report.

It added that it conducted the license plates of the trucks and the driving license of their drivers.

Car thieves make off with SUV

By Nancy C. Carvajal

POLICEMEN examine the window through which a robber entered a house in Barangay Sta. Quiteria, Quezon City. The robber and his cohorts stole the homeowner's Mitsubishi Montero.

A DAY after car thieves took a property a Mitsubishi Montero from its driver in Barangay Pulanlupa, Makati City another one was stolen, this time in Quezon City.

Chief Supt. Roquell Biseda, director of the Quezon City Police District (QCPD), said robbers broke into a house in Central 1 Subdivision, Barangay Tatalon, at around 5 a.m. yesterday.

They took the keys to three vehicles parked inside the garage, but only made off with a gray Toyota Vellfire—a black Mitsubishi Montero with license plate PBH 150.

Supt. Ferdinand Villanueva, the new head of the QCPD station theft division, said the vehicle was owned by Florentino Cuellar, 51, a relative of former Environment Secretary Antonio Cuellar.

"It's a new modus operandi of car robbers and they are becoming bolder," Biseda told the legion to replace him.

He said their initial investigators discovered that a man entered the house and took the car keys which were kept in a case in the living room.

Cuellar and his children were still asleep when the break-in occurred and the robbers drove away in their vehicle, Makinda added.

He said the robbers did not take anything else inside the house.

According to Villanueva, the car thieves entered the house by removing the screws of one of the window grills. At the time, the main gate to the house was not locked, one of the family's housemaids told the police.

The maid said that she saw a "dark-skinned man" prying in to the house through a window.

Manette said they would also question the other house helpers about the break-in and car theft.

"The maids are not suspects but there are questions in the investigation that only they could answer," he explained.

At the same time, he wondered why the car thief was not immediately suspected to be the police.

"A dragnet could have been established if it had been reported quickly," Manette said.

After the thief has escaped with the cards, she told me the next romantic rendezvous I would have would be a man with my name and my initials who I would be marrying soon.

By this time, I had come to a conclusion about her readings. What she tells her customers depends on the set of cards they choose. The more expensive the cards, the better their fortune.

Madam L then told me: "The answer to your question is yes."

Her prediction immediately came true because as soon as she put the cards away, she took out several packets of white powder from her shoulder bag. She carefully placed them on the table as I asked her what the rest of the rabbit hold for me.

Madam L answered, "It is just as the cards said. The rest of the rabbit is your fear. It will be slowly gone for you."

Except for the evil in my house which is causing me bad luck in my personal life or in my financial situation, I answered to myself.

Sensing as if I had not noticed the packets she had placed on the table, I asked her next, "So where do I get magic powder to get rid of the 'resident evil' in my house which is causing me bad luck?"

"I have already placed them on the table," she said with a smile. She added, "It is 11:00 a.m. You have to stay this with your bath water for seven days."

I bought one packet, just for the fun of it, and asked Madam L what I could safely afford a packet of the moment and would just return for the other one I needed to wash off the evil in my house. I paid her P250 for a bathed hair for the session and then left.

When I examined the magic powder, its texture and appearance were not as I was actually finely ground tawas or alum. At least it was something I could use for hygiene reasons afflicted by them as deodorizers, I thought, thinking positively.

Following my encounter with Madam L, I have slightly revised my definitions of "fools." I would now say that it means "guess," guess who is the fool because he is the one who does the guessing.

A close encounter with a 'manghuhula' in Quiapo

By Jeannette I. Andrade

IF SOMEONE were to ask me to recommend a "manghuhula" [one] in English, I would give its literal meaning which is "guess," in mind of "for unsettling."

For me, I'm a skeptic when it comes to people who say they can predict the future.

It's not because like most do-gooders I believe on the faith, nothing fortunetellers is frowned on. It has more to do with being realistic—that we are responsible for creating our own fate because the natural we take dictate our destiny.

It could also be because 10 years ago or even further back, a fortuneteller told me that I would be flying to another country the following year to marry a blue-eyed foreigner. Of course it never happened.

The reason once in Manila is probably a site of continuous lines, when it comes to religion and the occult. In Plaza Miranda, just a few steps away from the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene, one finds rows of tables occupied by fortune tellers.

Most of them claim they draw their ability from their devotion to the dark-colored Christ of Quiapo. Drawn devotees displace the practice for being contrary to the faith.

I approached the first fortuneteller in the long row of tables. The session—let's just call her Madam L—in her early 50s invited me to sit down on a bamboo chair. She told me that she had been telling fortunes for 40 years now.

Madam L placed three sets of cards on the table: a set of ordinary playing cards, a tarot set of unicorn cards and a bigger version of tarot cards.

"For reading your fortune using the playing cards, I will charge you P50. It's P100 for the small tarot cards and P200 for the bigger tarot set of tarot cards," she said.

When I chose the new cards, her demeanor visibly brightened. Looking at me straight in the eye, as she shuffled the cards, she said: "I can see from your aura that you are kind and generous."

What would she have told me had I chosen the cheapest set, I thought.

She then asked me to choose two cards from the batch for whom I was born under. As soon as I made my choices, Madam L read the cards. She said 2011 and 2012 would be lucky years for me personally and financial. In because 2011 was my year. She was at least right because I was born in 1975, the Year of the rabbit. The rest of the stuff about luck was something anybody would want to hear.

Madam L placed the cards back in the deck, looked straight at me as she shuffled them and asked me to choose nine from the pile. She examined my choices and said: "I can see that you are flying abroad soon. Do you have siblings abroad? Do you plan to go to Canada? You will be going there. I can see good news coming from your siblings," she said, pausing between sentences for effect.

"When your siblings ask you if you want to stay with them, say yes right away." Madam L added.

I was surprised. She had asked me in the beginning if I had relatives abroad and if I had told her my brothers were in Singapore. I had not and I have no I had a sister who was working in Canada.

Madam L shuffled the cards again and as she spread them face down on the table, she told me to pick 11 from the deck.

"Bring it to me in your home," she said solemnly after looking at my choices. "Find luck towards you because of it, either financially or personally. Maybe you should take a bath with a magic powder."

I thought, "What in the world is magic powder?" I immediately made a prediction of my own. She would be selling me any.

Madam L gathered up the cards again, shuffled them and asked me to choose another 14 cards.

This time she told me to ask a question in my mind which I did. My question was, "Will Madam L tell me what the magic powder is?"

It pays to drink cognac

ON TARGET

Ronnie Tejido

THE HOUSE senior statesmanship that the Catholic Church plans to wage in protest against the reproductive health (RH) bill will not happen.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), which is making the call, will be sorely disappointed.

Many Catholic Filipinos are not in favor of the bill, which government Free choice of family planning method. If the Catholic Church pushes the issue as a brawl, it will lose many followers.

* * *

Solidary are getting more and more demoralized by reports of corruption in the Armed Forces high command.

They see their generals living in big mansions at the AFP Officers Village, while they live in barracks.

They see their comrades in the field dying of bullet wounds for lack of medicines, only to learn that the money set aside for their medicines goes in the pockets of generals.

They suffer from malnutrition in the battlefield because they make do with biscuits and canned meat while their leaders in Camp Aguinaldo partake of steaks and caviar washed down with cognac or vodka.

Poor soldiers wear second-hand boots in the mountains while generals, their wives and children wear designer shoes and clothes courtesy of the corrupt system.

No wonder the government is not winning the war against the raging bands of Moro insurgents, the terrorist Abu Sayyaf and the communist rebels.

* * *

Executive Secretary Jojo Ochoa honored through the Commission on Appointments.

It pays to have weak dinners washed down with cognac with some lawmakers.

Ochoa, who leads what Sen. Joker Arroyo described as a "kubol (cozy) administration, is now a full-fledged Cabinet member.

* * *

The government should present Comelec Chair Sixto Brillantes Jr. to the Judicial and Bar Council so that he can be appointed as a Supreme Court justice.

Brillantes has been a member of the high court before.

He has also been a member of the Commission on Elections.

He has the experience.

The stockpile is being claimed by the Office of the Governor—without the consent of the provincial board—and the Iloilo Rural Mining Corp. (IRMC).

IRMC owns the land where the raw stockpile was mined.

The interest in the iron ore stockpile is understandable. If it is classified, it can fetch P1 billion if sold as is. P300 million.

* * *

Court of Appeals justices who have a "zero backlog" in cases they handle are given P50,000 each as a reward monthly, according to an insider.

But why the reward for disposing of cases when it's their job?

Anyway, researchers write the decisions for the justices even of solicit negotiate with "lobbyists."

Hunt on for suspects ...

From page A17

cutting that they were drinking.

The information on the photograph showed that it was taken at 10:42 p.m. on Saturday, same day, in case investigator PO2 Jamaa Laguesma.

"We are looking for these two men to shed light on the case because they were the last people seen with the victim [before he was killed]," SPO2 Quintin said in action chief, Insp. Arman Max Macaraig added.

The young men have yet to be identified. A check of the victim's Facebook account did not turn up any leads.

"We friends from Sexer couldn't identify them either," Macaraig said.

Bendix, who worked as a credit and collection department supervisor for the telecommunications firm, was killed inside his apartment on Nobel Street in the Mandaluyong City's naked body, which was found at around 5 a.m. on Sunday after neighbors noticed a pool of blood by the door.

According to the police, some of the victim's valuables—a cell phone, a laptop computer, an iPod, digital camera and video camera—were missing.

Bendix's neighbors told the police that they last saw him at around 10 p.m. on Saturday when he arrived home with the two young men in the photograph.

The pictures were found in digital camera hidden in a drawer in the victim's apartment. It was discovered by his family while they were cleaning the place.

In an earlier interview, Laguesma said that Bendix was probably taking a bath when his companions decided to rob the establishment. They may have panicked when he came out of the bathroom and caught them in the act of robbing him, he added.

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Casco

Yemen leader says he won't seek reelection

SANAA, Yemen—The Yemeni president told parliament on Wednesday that he would not seek another term in office or hand power to his son—an apparent reaction to protests in this impoverished nation that have been inspired by Tunisia's revolt and the turmoil in Egypt.

The 69-allied Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has been in power for nearly 32 years, spoke to lawmakers in both houses of the assembly on the eve of mass rallies that the opposition has called for on Thursday in all Yemeni provinces.

"I won't seek to extend my presidency for another term or have my son inherit it," Saleh told parliament.

Saleh has earlier tried to defuse simmering tensions in Yemen by vowing salaries for the army and by declaring opponents' claims he plans to install his son as his successor.

But that hasn't stopped critics of his rule from taking to the streets in recent days. On January, tens of thousands gathered in days of protests loudly calling for Saleh to step down—a red line that few dictators had previously dared to cross here.

Saleh's current term in office expires in 2013 but proposed amendments to the constitution would let him remain in power for two additional terms of two years.

After the Yemenis took which forced that country's president to flee into exile and the mass protests in Egypt call- ing for the end of President Hosni Mubarak's 30-year-long rule, Saleh ordered income taxes slashed in half and announced his government to control prices.

At the same time, he deployed police and soldiers to several key areas in Sanaa and to surroundings to prevent it- on.

But the street protests, led by opposition members and youth activists, continued, adding to the threats to Yemen's stability.

In parliament on Wednesday, Saleh called upon the opposition to meet for a dialogue on political reforms and their demands.

Opposition spokesperson Mohammed al-Sabri rejected the call for dialogue and expressed doubts about Saleh's pledge not to seek reelection.

Al-Sabri said Saleh made a similar promise in 2006, but failed to fulfill it, torn again and was reelected.

"The calls for dialogue are not serious and are merely meant to buy us time," al-Sabri said.

He added that the opposition parties would meet on Wednesday to prepare an official response to Saleh's announcements.

Yemen is the Arab world's most impoverished nation and has become a haven for al-Qaeda militants. Saleh's government is riddled with corruption, has little control outside the capital, and its main source of income—oil—would run dry in a decade.

Nearly half of Yemen's population lives below the poverty line of $2 a day and doesn't have access to proper sanitation. Less than a tenth of the roads are paved.

Tens of thousands have been displaced from their homes by conflicts, flooding the cities. The economy is enduring a recession in the north and a secessionist movement in the south. AP

ELSEWHERE and below: show slogans denouncing both the Jordanian and Egyptian governments during a Jan. 29 demonstration in Amman. The protests in Egypt could change the political landscape of the oil-rich Arab countries and beyond. Possible outcomes range from predominantly Islamist ruling charges in Cairo to an all-out war that brought in Israel and Iran. In between these two scenarios could be a long period of instability that could breed economic chaos across the region and derail economic recoveries in the United States and Europe. REUTERS

China censors reports on protests in Egypt

BEIJING—The protests in Egypt are about free elections and overthrowing a long-time dictator, but according to China's state media, which is painting them as the kind of chaos that comes with Western-style democracy.

The recent uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia are no doubt giving pause to many authoritarian regimes around the world, but nowhere else appear to be as determined to control the message as China.

Newspapers can only publish accounts of the protests from the government Xinhua News Service, a policy often mocked on cheeky government-controlled websites. Censors have blocked the ability to search the term "Egypt" on microblogging sites, and user comments that draw parallels to China have been deleted hours-to-minutes because.

While there is little chance the protests could spark destabilizations in China, the extent to which the long-ruling Chinese Communist Party is censoring the story underscores how wary it is of any potential source of unrest that might threaten its hold on power.

"Of course, the government doesn't want to see some movement on the protests, because stability is what they want," said Zhan Jian, a professor with the Media Department at the China Youth University for Political Sciences.

Elsewhere, authoritarian leaders from Madagascar to Iran have put their own spin on the Egyptian and Tunisian protests to justify their staying in power. Some have used the media to reinforce their message.

State-controlled television in the Ivory Coast has shown footage in Tunisia, explaining that is the cost of the country's leader stepping down. The assisted workers' The Iranian president is refusing to leave office two months after losing an election.

In Zimbabwe, media hand to longtime President Robert Mugabe has portrayed the protests in Egypt as anti-Imperialistic, an uprising against Egypt's leader because he is close to the United States. "This is exactly what happens when sovereign governments step with the devil," the state-run Daily Mail said.

But Zimbabweans can still chatter around TVs in sports clubs and bars, which have been switched from the usual sports programs to blanket coverage of the protests on Al-Jazeera and other satellite news channels. AP

WORLDBRIEFS

Indon cleric charged with plotting terrorism

JAKARTA—Prosecutors have formally charged Indonesia's best-known radical cleric with planning terrorist attacks, a crime that carries a maximum penalty of death. Abu Bakar Bashir, the 72-year-old spiritual head of the al-Qaida-linked Jemaah Islamiyah network, also was charged with helping fund a training camp set up in Aceh province and conducting illicit activities. Prosecutors presented the indictment on Wednesday to the South Jakarta District Court. They said 138 witnesses will testify at the trial, which is expected to begin next week. AP

Bomb kills 9, wounds 20 in NW Pakistan

PESHAWAR—A car bomb killed nine people close to the main northwestern city of Peshawar on Wednesday. The latest in a rash of attacks that also challenging recent police claims of progress against Islamist militants in the region. Twenty others were wounded in the blast not a main road leading to Peshawar's Bara area, a police official said. The explosion seldom sending the dead. It was the third major bombing in or near the city in the last week. AP

Brazil may add 'happiness' to constitution

BRASILIA—In a country known for its upbeat spirit, masses parties and seeming- ly intrinsic ability to celebrate anything under the sun, a constitutional amendment made public required to protect the pursuit of happiness? Several lawmakers think so, and a bill to amend the Brazilian Constitution to make the search for happiness an inalienable right is widely expected to be approved soon by the Senate, which is considered on Tuesday. The bill would then go to the lower house. The amendment, penned by Senator Cristovam Buarque, a socialist political leader with tens of thousands Twitter followers, and Senator Marcelo Crivella, a member of the Republican Party of Social Christians, says the happiness bill is a serious undertaking despite the levity, meant to address Brazil's stark economic and social inequalities. AP

Somali pirates torturing hostages

NAIROBI—Somali pirates are systematically torturing hostages and using them as human shields, the top commander of the European Union Naval Force said on Tuesday. Pirates have recently tied hostages upside down and dragged them in the sea, locked them in freezers, beaten them and used plastic bag around their genitals, Rear Adm. Duncan Lewis told reporters in Brussels. "These have been unspeakable manifestations of systematic torture," he said. Piracy has apparently prevented a predicted drop in economy. The pirates would drag hostages on deck and beat them in front of naval officers until the warship went away, Lewis said. His account of the worsening treatment of hostages was based on hostage debriefings, naval intelligence and liaison with commercial shipping companies. AP

Gay sex, gambling addict sues Glaxo

NAIROBI—A French father-of-two on Tuesday took GlaxoSmithKline to court, alleging that the British firm's drug to treat Parkinson's disease turned him into a gay sex and gambling addict. The 53-year-old said his behavior changed overnight after he was first administered the drug, Requip, in 2003 for the illness, which causes tremors, stone movement and disrupts speech. Didier Jambart, who says he attempted suicide eight times, wants $6-9,000 from Glaxo, which for its account of selling a "defective" drug, and from his neurologist for failing to properly inform him about the drug. AFP

'Jihad Jane' pleads guilty in US

PHILADELPHIA—A suburban woman who used the Internet to recruiter for her boyfriend's elderly father calmly told a US judge that she had worked to murder a Swedish cartoonist. Colleen LaRose, 47, faces the possibility of life in prison after pleading guilty on Tuesday to four federal charges, including conspiracy to murder a foreign target, conspiracy to support terrorists and lying to the FBI. AP

Year of the Rabbit may also be year of love cheats

HONG KONG—The Chinese calendar may be set to welcome in the "Year of the Rabbit" but the new year could be inauspicious for love cheats, astrologers predict, and those who cheat may meet a younger partner.

China celebrates the first day of the Lunar New Year on Thursday and many Chinese people are keen on using the occasion to get a glimpse of what might be in store next year.

The "Year of the Rabbit" will see a lot of personal romance relationships," Hong Kong astrologer Anthony Cheng said "including extramarital affairs and relationships with huge age differences."

Cheng said husbands and wives should keep watch for wandering eyes as their partner's passions look for stimulation elsewhere, although the coming year would also be lucky for couples planning to tie the knot.

"The fate of the Rabbit is an auspicious time for marriages, so I would expect to see a lot of people taking the plunge, including famous people," he added.

"Those who are single are likely to find girlfriends or boyfriends, those who are in relationships are likely to get married, while those who are married are likely to have babies," Cheng predicted.

Weird weather patterns and natural disasters are also in the offing in the Year of the Rabbit.

"Countries like the US, Canada and Taiwan will probably suffer from natural disasters or accidents," said astrologer Alvin Ho. "The weather will oscillate between the extremes...it will either be extremely cold or extremely hot."

And it'll be a mixed bag for some months after losing an election.

In Zimbabwe, media hand to longtime President Robert Mugabe has portrayed the protests in Egypt as anti-Imperialistic, an uprising against Egypt's leader because he is close to the United States. "This is exactly what happens when sovereign governments step with the devil," the state-run Daily Mail said.

But Zimbabweans can still chatter around TVs in sports clubs and bars, which have been switched from the usual sports programs to blanket coverage of the protests on Al-Jazeera and other satellite news channels. AP

Drug 'queen' gets Botox behind bars

MEXICO CITY—Hair and hallow who couldn't keep a repeated Mexican drug cartel "queen" from getting Botox in prison, authorities said Wednesday.

Mexico City's prison authority said a doctor was improperly administered to Sandra Avelia Avendaño, a woman's hookup in January to perform what is called a "preventive nose job" but isn't for everyone."

City prison officials have said in a statement that the doctor gave a Botox injection to Sandra Avila Beltran, a purported top drug cartel figure in the Sinaloa cartel better known as the "Queen of the Pacific."

Avila Beltran has been in custody since 2007 on suspicion of conspiracy to traffic drugs, money laundering and organized crime, if judge appointed her on all three charges in December last year, but prosecutors are appealing that ruling.

She also faces possible extradition to the United States in connection with the 2001 seizure of more than nine tons of U.S.-bound cocaine aboard a fishing vessel in the port of Manzanillo, along Mexico's west coast.

Avila Beltran has denied the allegations. She has insisted she made her money selling clothes and running horses.

At the time of her arrest, her boyfriend was supported Colombian trafficker Juan Diego Espinosa Martinez. Prosecutors said Avila Beltran spent more than a decade working her way to the top of Mexico's drug trade, reducing several notorious kingpins and raising Colombian and Mexican gangs. AP

Crossroads to Choose Life or to Choose Death:
A Dilemma to Development

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Feb. 3
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Feb. 3, 2pm, 4pm and 6pm City Block Atrium

Get a special fortune cookie with every P300 purchase from participating stores.

Wushu Discovery and Chinese Lion Dance
Feb. 3, 4pm City Style 4th Floor

Be part of the exciting festivities as the Martial Arts Exhibition Shaolin students perform Wushu, the modern Chinese sport, plus an energetic lion dance.

Marites Allen Astrology Forecast
Feb. 3, 5pm
City Block Atrium

Watch and celebrate the Chinese New Year with the country's premier Feng Shui expert Marites Allen as she unveils to all the 2011 Feng Shui Forecast for the Year of the GOLDEN RABBIT.

Chinese Calligraphy
Feb. 3, 4pm City Block Atrium

Witness the time-honored Asian art of Chinese calligraphy and get your name translated by professional Chinese calligraphers.

Avail of Chinese Treats at SM City North EDSA

SM City North EDSA's Chinese restaurants welcome the Year of the Rabbit with sumptuous specialties inspired by what is traditionally considered lucky food. Make Chinese New Year special for your loved ones at SM City North EDSA.

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Editor Raul G. Manalo ● Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano
BUSINESS

IN THIS ISSUE
■ PH one of best places for energy efficiency projects /B5

Customs nets P22.4B in January

2nd highest monthly record in bureau's history

By Rocco M. Domingo

THE BUREAU of Customs collected P22.39 billion in January, exceeding its target for the month by P216 million.

Customs Commissioner Angelito A. Alvarez said the performance augured well for the bureau, which is tasked to collect P520 billion this year.

The 2011 revenue program for Customs is 14 percent higher than the P380 billion target in 2010.

Earlier this month, Alvarez said that Customs might have missed last year's target by about 11 percent or P50 billion.

Preliminary documents from the bureau's financial revenue division showed that January collections were higher by P2.02 billion or 14.5 percent than what it earned during the same month last year.

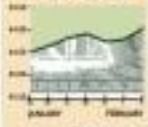
According to the bureau, last month's revenues were the second-highest monthly cash collection in the history of Customs—the top being the P23.5 billion recorded in July 2010.

Alvarez said the better-than-expected revenues for January were due to reforms in the agency such as the abolition of inoperforming units, merger of those with duplicating functions, nationwide implementation of

CUSTOMS, B2

INDICATORS

PESO-DOLLAR RATE
Feb. 2, 2011
43.965



STOCK MARKET
Feb. 3, 2011
60.58

Stocks up on Wall St. gains

LEGAL STOCKS jumped 1.58 percent yesterday as a euphoric overnight trading in Wall Street inspired bargain hunting after the three-day bloodbath.

The main index Philippine Stock Exchange index added 69.68 points to close at 3,881.22.

Investors took heart from the surge in US stocks to a two-year high, which allowed the closely

STOCKS, B2

Gov't execs woo Japanese investors

By Nikgel L. Ho and Amy R. Roma

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry is mustering Japanese investors to participate in various public-private partnership projects, particularly the 30 that are scheduled for implementation this year, leveraging on the long-standing good trade and investment relations between the two countries.

At the recently concluded 29th Joint meeting of the Philippines-Japan and Japan-Philippines Economic Cooperation committees in Tokyo, Trade Secretary Gregory Domingo presented the country's infrastructure needs to members of the Japanese delegation as well as to portfolio investors and private firms.

Among the projects he mentioned were the 18 that were programmed to start this year.

GOV'T, B2

Megaworld sales hit P50B

By Doris C. Dumlao

Expects P4B in rental income this year

TAIPAN ANDREW Tan's flagship property development unit Megaworld Corp. yesterday reported that it sold P49.66 billion worth of residential units last year across different market segments, surging 89 percent from a year ago.

The Megaworld group comprises three brands catering to different market segments: Megaworld, which caters to the middle- to upper-end residential market, and Empire East and Suntrust, which are focused on medium-cost and affordable housing, respectively.

The flagship Megaworld brand contributed P39.59 billion to the group's 2010 sales. The amount came from Megaworld's ongoing residential projects in fifteen Manila, including Eastwood City, McKinley Hill, Newport City and Mandarin Garden City.

Megaworld's sister companies, Empire East Land and Suntrust Properties, posted combined sales of P10.05 billion last year. Both developers have ongoing projects in Metro Manila and in the nearby growth corridor of Cavite and Laguna.

The reported reservation sales for 2010 needed to be 25 percent paid by buyers before these could be recognized as sales in the company's income statement.

The group has five such mega-community projects on the star in the most strategic locations in Metro Manila: Eastwood City in Quezon City; McKinley Hill, McKinley West and Bonifacio Uptown in Fort Bonifacio, and Newport City in Pasay City.

Once fully developed, the five mega-communities will be home to some 60,000 families and 200,000 business person outworking office workers.

The year, Megaworld said it would complete delivery of close to 5,700 units in Bellagio 3, Richmond, Parkland Tower 2, Residential Tower in Newport City Suntown and Pinecrest, Stanford Executive Residences Tower 1, 2 and 3, Manhattan Parkway Tower 1 and 2, Cityplace Tower A and B, Greenbelt Dumaguete, Greenbelt Excelsior and Greenhills Heights.

Aside from the residential property business, Megaworld said it expected rental income to exceed P4 billion for 2011. Megaworld said it would complete Lucky Chinatown Mall, which would have more than 100,000 square meters of retail space, by end-2011. It will also complete more than 77,700 square meters of new office space to cater to the growing demand of BPO companies.

"Megaworld will grow its rental portfolio of BPO Office developments and retail malls from 410,000 sqm in 2010 to around 650,000 sqm by end 2011," the company said.

Ayala Land to put up golf course in Anvaya

PROPERTY giant Ayala Land Inc. is investing about P1 billion to build what is touted to be a prime eco-friendly golf course on its 580-hectare upscale seaside leisure estate development known as Anvaya Cove in Batangas.

In a briefing yesterday, ALI senior vice president Bobby Dy said about 80 hectares of the leisure estate in Morong, Batangas, would be devoted to an 18-hole, all-weather championship golf course. This would be alongside new amenities such as a sports club with gym, badminton, basketball, tot and pantries swimming pool complex and gastronomic facilities meant to engage visiting members of families.

Development of the Anvaya Cove Golf and Sports Club would be fully completed by 2015. On hold, nearing three years, phase one of the golf course could be ready for playing by the latter part of next year.

ALI plans to initially sell up to 1,500 golf club shares for P1.2 million and P1.8 million each for individual and corporate memberships.

Dy said ALI, which started selling club shares only last Friday, might be able to sell 500 to 600 shares this year. The golf course is seen breaking even once a critical mass of 800 shares had been taken up.

Buyers of the golf club shares will also have access to Anvaya Cove's beach and country club, which was developed much earlier and had opened in 2008. The beach club has about 16,000 members, some of whom could upgrade to the new club, Dy said.

"Anvaya Cove is a tangible representation of Ayala Land Premier's thrust for environmental sustainability and builds the dimensions of living

AYALA 22

ARTIST'S perspective of the Lucky Chinatown Mall, which is expected to become the new icon of the Binondo area.

Sy to acquire 20% stake in Megawide

THE FAMILY of tycoon Henry Sy plans to buy 20 percent of construction and engineering firm Megawide Construction Corp., which will go public this month.

Megawide officials confirmed that the Sys, through a privately held unit, had made a "firm commitment" to buy a big block of the shares to be sold through an initial public offering this February.

The planned purchase will account for the 20 percent of Megawide's P2.25-billion IPO, which will run from Feb. 7 to 11, the officials said. This means that the Sys will invest P1.25 billion in Megawide's IPO.

Megawide is the builder of 60 percent of the commercial condominium projects of the Sy family's SM Development Corp. But aside from the SM group, it also works with other companies such as Belle Corp., Ayala Group, Bayan Corp., owner of Bonifacio Prime Inn Development Group, Bellevue Hotel Group, Keppel Land Realty, Makati Bayview Development Group and Guildford Properties and Dynamic Realty.

GMDC accounts for about 70 percent of Megawide's business.

Despite the firm's close ties with the Sys, Megawide officials said the company was looking beyond GMDC for long-term growth. They said Megawide would also scout for opportunities from the government's public-private partnership (PPP) framework on infrastructure building.

"What [Sys] want to buy more but we agreed on a 20 percent [buy-in] because we also want to call shots in other institutional and investment ventures," one Megawide official said.

Megawide, the first company to go public this year, is selling 200 million new common shares priced at P1.84 each, which will give the public a 30 percent stake in the company. All of its 857 million post-IPO shares will be listed on the main board of the Philippine Stock Exchange on Feb. 16. The offer price will be finalized by today.

The issue manager and lead underwriter of the offering is BDO Capital and Investment Corp.

Doris C. Dumlao

Stocks up on Wall St. gains

From page B1

searched Dow Jones industrial index to break out of the 12,000 mark. Backed by broad-based buying, the Dow surged 148.23 points or 1.25 percent to 12,040.16 on Tuesday while the broader S&P 500 and tech-heavy Nasdaq rallied 1.67 percent and 1.90 percent, respectively.

"Positive leads from overseas, especially a growing body of evidence that the US economy is gaining and sustaining its momentum, inspired bargain hunters following the ticks," Rose-Gaston 4-percent dicks," according to David stock brokerage Second Capital Equities Corp.

The day's upswing was led by the holding firms and property counters, which rose 2.45 percent and 1.56 percent, while all other counters were up more than 1 percent.

Trades were thin at P4 billion but dealers said this was due to preparations for the Chinese New Year today. Most investors at the local stock exchange are from the Philippine-Chinese community.

The only way down by local investors as they were net sellers in net foreign selling recorded for the day.

There were 76 advancers for edgelove 56 decliners while 62 stocks were unchanged.

Heavy buying in Banco de Oro, Alliance Global Group, Aboitiz Power Meralco, Ayala, Ayala, Filinvest Land, Ayala Land, Manila Mining, Metrobank, PhilPetro Land, BDC, Atlas Consolidated Mining, Megaworld, DMCI Holdings and Lafarge & Petron Malaysia boosted the market.

On the other hand, PLDT and SM Investments trailed in the red. Doris C. Dumlao

Customs nets P22.4B in January

From page B1

the electronic cash system, strengthening of Customs' valuation reference information system and improvements in customs bonded warehouse management.

"The positive impact of [these initiatives], which we started to put in place mid-dle of last year, was felt in early to November and December when revenues rose to P2.8 billion and P3.0 billion, respectively," he said.

He added that such figures were higher than the bureau's average monthly collection in 2009 by at least P2 billion.

Preliminary data from the Department of Finance—the bureau's parent agency—showed that the government might have incurred a budget deficit of P53.6.4 billion in 2010, about P31 billion less than expected.

Based on data from the department's document, Business group, the "notorgoing" deficit figure was 4-percent bigger than the P529.3 billion posted in the previous year.

Revenues reached P1.21 trillion, growing by 17.7 percent from P1.02 billion raised in 2009. However, the amount was P85.2 billion or 6.6-percent short of the P1.29-trillion revenue target for 2010.

Expenses reached P1.82 trillion, or about P180 billion less than the programmed P1.82 trillion. The disbursements last year grew 6.9 percent from P1.42 trillion in 2009.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

CURRENCIES

Gov't approves new way of measuring poverty

By Ria T. Dizhon

THE NATIONAL Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB), which compiles social and economic statistics, has approved a new way of measuring poverty.

"The refinements in methodology will better reflect the actual situation and unique conditions in the provinces. This will better help in government targeting," Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Cayetano Paderanga said in a phone interview.

The computations on factors affecting poverty, such as income standards and the prices and availability of food, will be done per province under the new methodology rather than by region.

Urbanization, for example, may be more pronounced in one province than others in the same region. The cost of living may differ, as well as spending patterns, price levels, food sources, and so on, Paderanga said.

"A person who is considered poor in one province may not be poor in another," he said.

The NSCB is set to reveal poverty data for 2000, 2006, 2003, 1999 and 1991, Paderanga said.

With the new methodology applied to old data, there would be an average drop of 4 to 5 percentage points in the poverty line, NSCB Secretary General Romulo Virola said in a separate interview.

Nearly insidence among individuals, according to 2006 data presented at an NSCB consultation, was at 32.9 percent. This would go down to 27.4 percent under the new methodology.

The incidence in 2003 would also go down to 26.7 percent from 30 percent.

The new way of measuring poverty incidence trimmed the annual per capita poverty threshold in 2006 to P15,000 from P15,057 under the old methodology. The threshold for 2003 dropped to P11,197 from P12,309.

Meanwhile, the annual per capita food threshold for 2006 dropped to P9,260 from P10,021 while the threshold for 2003 declined to P7,270 from P8,198.

While economic planners and statisticians see these changes as a boost to goal setting, other stakeholders are concerned over the impact on anti-poverty programs and even minimum wage setting.

Economists note that the poverty threshold, which indicates the income level needed for a "decent" life, is the basis for the minimum wage.

With the poverty line moving downward, the basis for the minimum wage would also go lower, which may not sit well with the labor sector.

However, Virola said that minimum wage need not be pegged on the poverty line.

Concerns over minimum wage, anti-poverty moves raised

CIAC advised to junk Clark airport dev't bid

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CLARK FREEPORT—The development of the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport (DMIA) has hit a snag as a committee of the state-owned Clark International Airport Corp. proposed to end and reject negotiations with Philippe Auxo, a Filipino-Korean businessman.

The CIAC's joint ventures solicitation committee (JVSC) made the recommendation through a resolution, which was dated Jan. 13 and submitted to the CIAC board on Jan. 14, documents showed.

CIAC chair Teodoro Mangio, however, said the matter had not been taken up and resolved by the board.

The six-member JVSC, chaired by CIAC vice president for administration and finance Romeo Bunoz, said deadlocked negotiations with Philtoe Auxo "proved unsuccessful owing to the drastic changes in the original terms and conditions of the submitted proposal (on May 17, 2010)."

These include the "removal of its $7.6-million offer to CIAC for the development of a 20-hectare commercial property and variation on the equity contribution of parties to the proposed joint venture company."

The technical design and proposal of the consortium was "no longer be feasible and even physically non-implementable" given the recent renovation of the DMIA Terminal 1, the JVSC said.

It said two CIAC departments found "possible inconsistencies" between Philtoe-Auxo's design and the recently completed land use plan study made by the Asia Foundation and United States Agency for International Development.

The JVSC also cited the need to amend the government's 2000 joint venture guidelines "in order that all joint venture projects shall pass through the National Economic and Development Authority-Investment Coordination Committee approval process to ensure transparency consistency in investment policy decision, and appropriateness of risk allocation among parties."

It also asked the CIAC board to suspend the processing of other joint venture proposals and to dissolve the CIAC's JVSC since it has become irrelevant.

The consortium last year offered to invest $7.77 million in the development of DMIA.

Philtoe Auxo is majority owned by Filipino firm Penson and Co. with foreign partners consisting of South Korea-based Power Engineering and Construction Co., Seoul Prime-owner Gongsyo and Korea Development Bank.

The DMIA was rebuilt by the government out of the aviation complex of the United States Air Force when the latter pulled out of the former Clark Air Base in 1991.

The 2,500-hectare airport, which is filled with four 3-km runways, is the base of cargo forwarder UPS, Asiana Airlines, Cebu Pacific and several international carriers offering budget flights.

A VENDOR displays round fruits, which are believed to bring luck for the Chinese New Year, along a busy street in Chinatown, The Lunar New Year begins today and marks the start of the Year of the Rabbit, according to the Chinese zodiac. AFP/JOE

GMA, ABS-CBN claim top spot

By Paolo G. Montecillo

THE COUNTRY'S two major networks have claimed the lead in nationwide television ratings for the first month of the year.

Both ABS-CBN Corp. and GMA Network Inc. said that they earned the year as the most watched television station in the country.

In a statement on Tuesday, ABS-CBN said it garnered a 46 percent audience share in the primetime slot or nine points higher than GMA's 37 percent.

Overall, nine ABS-CBN programs made it to the country's top 10 most watched programs in January, the company said in a statement, based on data released by research firm Kantar Media. ABS-CBN is Kantar Media's main subscriber for its television ratings data.

Meanwhile, GMA Network said it had taken the lead in nationwide ratings from rival ABS-CBN in January, the latest data from AGB Nielsen showed.

Officials likewise said that it captures its ratings in contrast to last year throughout the year as the quality of its programs and strength of its broadcast signal nationwide surpass that of its rivals.

Nielsen's National Urban Television Audience Measurement (Nuam) data showed an average of 33 percent of households watched any GMA show for the month of January. This is higher than Lopez-led ABS-CBN's 31.6 percent audience share in the same period.

Manuel V. Pangilinan's Associated Broadcasting Corp., which runs the station TV5, had an audience share of just 11 percent.

In the viewer mix Urban Luzon area, where close to two-thirds of all homes with television sets are, GMA had an even bigger lead with an audience share of 36.3 percent over ABS-CBN's 28.5 percent and TV5's 17.5 percent.

Batangas port buildup pushed

By Rommel W. Dominguez

A SEVELOPER of real estate south of Metro Manila is calling on Malacañang to build up the Batangas port as an alternative to the ports in Manila, saying such a move will demonstrate the business case for public-private partnership (PPP) projects.

Kelso Luis, vice president of Luisa Land Inc., said operators operating in Batangas will not have to wait out the truck ban, as they do in Manila, since there is direct access via the diversionary road from the Balagtas exit of the Southern Tagalog Arterial Road (Star) to the port in Barangay Isasa, Cuta, Batangas City.

"I believe that opening the Batangas port as the alternative port should be seriously considered," he said.

Luisa Land is engaged in the development of some 7,000 hectares of residential, commercial and industrial complexes in Luzon and Batangas.

These complexes are found within the Luisa Technology Center (LTC), a township located at the boundary of Lipa City and Malvar town and under partnership with Ilustre Land Corp. and Marvilest Corp.

LTC is divided into an export processing zone and a general trade zone as well as residential, commercial and leisure areas.

Luis said LTC's large locators—including Epson, Yamaha and LittelBlue—are expanding their facilities to accommodate expanding operations driven by the improvement of transportation with the widened South Luzon Expressway and the link with the Star tollway.

Aside from the obvious savings in fuel costs, improved transport has also reduced the decades-long threat of missed shipping deadlines due to traffic congestion, Luis said.

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Ayala Land . . .

From page B2

ure first leisure community development," ALI president Antonino Aquino said.

The new development is being undertaken in partnership with Golf Plan, a globally renowned design firm specializing in sustainable golf course development.

Doris C. Dumlao

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EURO3&4

Republic of the Philippines
ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION TO CLARIFY THE TREATMENT OF STRANDED COSTS RESULTING FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENT (PPA) BETWEEN ANSALDO DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (ADC) AND THE NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION-STRATEGIC POWER UTILITIES GROUP (NPC-SPUG), WITH PRAYER FOR PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY

ANSALDO DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (ADC),
Petitioner,
x - - -

PH one of best places for energy efficiency projects

Investment potential placed at $3.8 billion

By Amy R. Remo

THE PHILIPPINES ranked third among fourth-least Asian nations as the best investment destination for energy efficiency projects, as the country was seen to have an investment potential of as much as $3.8 billion or about P170 billion.

Speaking at the forum "Addressing Climate Change through Energy Efficiency Investments," Frédéric Gamper of the Singapore-based Infra Capital said the Philippines' standing could be attributed to its ability to provide an attractive regulatory framework, sufficient capacity to undertake such projects and a favorable, shorter payback period.

Gamper said the Philippines could offer prospective investors $794 million to $3.8 billion worth of energy efficiency projects (including industrial co-generation projects), which could translate to a cut in the country's oil import bill of at least $213 million or about P9.7 billion yearly.

Such projects are likewise expected to result in a 1.5 percent reduction in carbon emissions by the end of 2020.

Gamper was citing the results of a feasibility study that Infra Capital has conducted to identify which was the best investment destination among the six Southeast Asian countries it studied, namely, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam.

Both Capital Asia estimated the market potential of each of the six countries for energy-efficiency projects, as well as assessed and compared their regulatory and policy environment and energy services companies (Esco) turnout.

Of the six, Singapore was considered the best investment destination, followed by Thailand and the Philippines.

The energy efficiency projects—targeted to lower the consumption of energy of the commercial and industrial sectors—would involve implementing audits; wherein the opportunities for savings are identified and evaluated for their economic feasibility through equipment, fixtures and infrastructure replacement, changes in procedures and operating schedules.

At the Philippines, Gamper said the top subsectors in the industrial sector for energy efficiency projects were food and beverages, chemicals, textile, non-metallic minerals and transport equipment. The payback period for these could be one and a half to three and a half years.

For the commercial sector, the market for such projects included offices, retail malls and hotels.

But while the energy efficiency sector presents an "exciting" opportunities for investors, financing, technology suppliers and financial institutions, Gamper admitted that the billion-dollar market in the Philippines and the rest of Southeast Asia remained largely untapped due to a number of barriers including lack of awareness, limited access to financing and subsidized energy tariffs to certain customers.

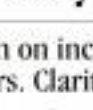
The Philippine Department of Energy has enacted measures to push for energy efficiency in commercial and industrial buildings, as it enacted the nationalization of private loans to operate as an Esco.

"Energy efficiency and energy conservation form parts of sustainability development that I am an advocate of. I hope that the Esco industry in the country takes off and helps the country confront the multi-faced challenges that we face," said Energy Secretary Jose Rene D. Almendras.

My two-cents worth on incriminating statements of Mrs. Clarita Garcia

POINT OF LAW

FRANCIS LIM



Are the statements admissible against Gen. Garcia?

In the prosecution of Mrs. Garcia's co-conspirators, in court testimonies or in selling her as a witness against her husband, if so, the statements may be barred under the spousal immunity rule. The rule is that during their marriage, neither the husband nor the wife may testify for or against the other without the consent of the affected spouse (Sec. 20(b), Rule 130).

Note also that the case at hand involves more than P900 million. The latest money allowances and secret realizations turned over to this amount. Mrs. Garcia stated that her husband also received payoffs from the other co-conspirators. The question then is: how did the acquirer knowledge of those payoffs? Was she present when her husband received the money? Or did she just get such information as a matter of confidential communication between husband and wife? If so, the statements may be inadmissible in evidence under the marital privilege rule, which prohibits either the husband or the wife to be examined, without the consent of the other, as to any communication received in confidence by one from the other during the marriage (Sec. 25, Rule 130).

Both the spousal immunity and marital privilege rules have exceptions. They do not apply to a "civil case by one against the other, or in a criminal case for a crime committed by one against the other or the latter's direct descendants or ascendants." Note, however, that the exceptions are few and limited and the case at hand does not appear to fall under any of those exceptions.

But why did the prosecutors not grab the Garcia case as co-operative witness for a crime-based exception to the spousal immunity and marital communications rule? In the scheme of things, spouses of government officials normally utilize themselves for the supposed benefit of the spouse's ill-gotten wealth. If there is a crime-based exception to the spousal immunity and marital privilege rule, it would certainly help the Ombudsman bring many government officials to jail. We all we know, the prosecutors' reason for not using Mrs. Garcia's crime-based exception to draw two rules, as it did in the case of the attorney-client privilege. After all, these rules were never intended to facilitate the commission of a crime or fraud.

Note also that it is not, Garcia, not his wife, who is given the right to object to the introduction of the statements in court. The question is: Did Gen. Garcia give his consent to Mrs. Garcia's making the statements before the 115 Caraveta people? If so, should he not be considered as having waived his right to object to the presentation of the statements as evidence against him?

If Mrs. Garcia cannot be made to testify due to the spousal immunity and marital privilege rules, are the statements inadmissible in evidence against him, Garcia for being hearsay? In this regard, it should be noted that a co-conspirator's statement is not an exception to the hearsay rule but to the no-rule-at-all-rule.

The said rule provides that the rights of a party, Garcia I cannot be prejudiced by an act, declaration, or omission of another (Mrs. Garcia). By way of exception, the Rules of Court provide that the "act or declaration of a conspirator relating to the conspiracy and during its existence, may be given in evidence against the co-conspirator after the conspiracy is shown by evidence other than such act or declaration" (Sec. 30, Rule 130).

Note that, as Sec. Enrile pointed out, the exception requires that there be independent evidence of conspiracy. What there is for independent evidence establishing the conspiracy between the Garcia spouses? Is Mrs. Garcia really a co-conspirator or merely an accessory who profited from the effects of the crimes committed by her husband? Or should she be seen as a conspirator under the exception he hereby construed as to include a mere accessory to the crime?

Also, the co-conspirator's exception requires that the statement be made during the conspiracy, in fact, during the crime. The Supreme Court ruled that co-conspirators' statements made during the investigation of the crime charged are not admissible under this exception because they were made after the conspiracy had already ceased (see, e.g., People vs. Ocampo, 102 Phil. 1133(1957), Feb. 1, 1958 and US vs. Espiritusb., 9 Phil. 613 (1908)).

If Mrs. Garcia's statements cannot be presented in court either under the spousal immunity or marital privilege rule and the co-conspirator's statements made after the commission

BUSINESS

US firm, Napocor ink agreement on power projects

PNB bikes stake in leasing firm

By Doris C. Dumlao

TYCOON LUCIO Tan-led Philippine National Bank has raised its stake in a leasing firm, Japan-PNB Leasing & Finance, to 90 percent from 60 percent.

PNB disclosed to the Philippine Stock Exchange that it had acquired the additional stake from minority partners ITO Leasing Co. Ltd. and Mitsubo Corporate Bank which held 23 percent and 7 percent, respectively.

ITO, however, remains an active joint venture partner with its remaining 10-percent interest and one seat in the board of Japan-PNB Leasing.

"Both PNB and ITO are fully committed to contribute their respective resources to further enhance the position of Japan-PNB Leasing as one of the top leasing companies in the country today," PNB said.

Established in 1998, Japan-PNB Leasing offers financial leasing, sale-leasebacks, inventory loans, lease-purchase arrangements and term loans. It is also into operating leases. This leasing company has the largest portfolio of Japanese accounts among its peers to date.

By Jerry R. Rivera

US-BASED CLEMENTE Corp. has forged another agreement with state-run National Power Corp. to rebuild its plant in just top biomass facilities that can provide 15 megawatts in additional capacities to current off-grid areas.

Under the seven-page memorandum of agreement, Napocor has agreed to assist Clemente in securing sovereign risk coverage for the investors who will finance the planned power projects.

Clemente plans to put up three proposed facilities in Romblon, to add another 5 MW to the island; Kalinga, 1.5 MW; and Mindoro, 3.5 MW.

This move, Napocor said in a statement posted on its website, will "make investing in off-grid areas more attractive, and at the same time, provide a safety net for project investors."

According to Napocor, Clemente plans to tap the the global financial markets to take advantage of the prevailing strong interest in alternative and renewable energy projects among institutional and private investors.

To make local biomass power projects more attractive, Clemente and Napocor will execute a 10-20R consolidated power purchase agreement.

Last year, Clemente conducted a feasibility study on the proposed biomass power plants to three of the off-grid areas. The company wanted to use wood chips as feedstock for the facilities. The technology will require an investment of at least $1 million, to produce a megawatt of power.

In the meantime, the MOA advised-edged that Clemente's biomass projects were "in line with Napocor's own off-grid Power Development Plans."

Napocor president Froilan A. Tampinco reckoned Clemente's plan to put up biomass power plants in off-grid areas, saying that this would help diversify and bolster Napocor's sources of power in areas where its small power utilities group (SPUG) operates.

Through the SPUG, Napocor maintains several small power facilities in far-flung areas, as it is mandated by law to provide electricity in remote areas that are not connected to any of the three main power grids.

Almost all the generation facilities being operated by SPUG are diesel-based.

The Napocor SPUG currently operates 232 generating units with a total generated capacity of about 175 megawatts (MW). It serves 216 island and isolated grids, providing electricity to 47 customers consisting of 10 electric cooperatives, seven local government units and one multipurpose cooperative.

State firm to help investor secure sovereign risk cover

LIFESTYLE Food

My top 8 Chinese restaurants in Metro Manila

By Clinton Palanca

THERE ARE the top eight Chinese restaurants in Metro Manila. They're what I think are the best restaurants, not as voted by readers or a panel of judges, though I did ask for other people's opinions, and would not have been able to complete this list without my trusty and opinionated informants.

My criteria for a good Chinese restaurant are the same as my criteria for restaurants in general: that they provide good food in a nice environment, and continue to do so every time one returns.

I'm obviously being simplistic here, but the business of rating restaurants has become so arcane that it's easy to forget the basics.

Completed with my trusted and opinionated informants

Good food doesn't sit around waiting to be judged on aesthetics or creativity or style. It's delicious. It leaps down your throat and smacks you around and shakes you up and makes you say aaah and you can't move, then stays in your mind and wants you to come back tomorrow.

And for Chinese, these are the places I go back to.

Feng Shui Talk by Joy Lim FEB 1 Greenbelt 3 • FEB 3 Trinoma • FEB 4 Market! Market!
FEB 5 Alabang Town Center • FEB 8 MarQuee Mall • FEB 8 Ayala Center Cebu
Hotel Food Fest FEB 3-6 Glorietta 5 • FEB 5 Ayala Center Cebu
Lion & Dragon Dance FEB 2 Market! Market! • FEB 3 Greenbelt • FEB 3 Alabang Town Center
FEB 3 Bonifacio High Street • FEB 3 Trinoma • FEB 3 MarQuee Mall • FEB 6 Ayala Center Cebu
Good Luck Charms Exhibit JAN 28-FEB 3 Market! Market! • JAN 29-FEB 11 MarQuee Mall • FEB 2-6 Greenbelt 3

MARQUEE

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Adobong Pagong, Century-Old Morcon, taco 'lumpia'—Binondo, in 2011, is an exotic feast

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

A gustatory tour of Chinatown unearths nostalgic gems

CHINATOWN hosts Nina Co, Rhea Ong, Joseph Tio, Mike Co and Tessa Ruggero

RHEA ONG

I RECENTLY asked my fellow-farmer co-parent representatives to take me on a gustatory tour of Chinatown.

Led by Joseph Tio, Tessa Ruggero and Rhea Ong, our set met Jan. 27 at Quick Snack (tel. 2425572), Carvajal St., for appetizers to be followed by our Binondo dining experience.

We had Kuchay Empanada and Tao's Lumpia—Chinese lumpia served on crisp mini taco-like shells (which are really lumpia wrappers shaped and fried). All delicious: sweet, tasty, with a delightful play of textures.

Done with appetizers, we trekked along Carvajal, itself an attraction with the sport of Chinese New Year everywhere. So many things caught my eye.

Before I know it, we were at Simplicity (tel. 2419998), Nieves St., famous for its fried chicken.

With it, we had iced goat (Hi-tone, a well-done oyster cake and duck noodle soup with other Chinese stuffs).

Like children, we came, conquered and then marveled to Tasty Dumplings (tel. 2425195) along Dasmariñas, this time for its giant fried pork chops (with hints of blue-spice powder and perhaps some turmeric), pounded, dipped in batter, deep-fried, and dumplings, served steamed and fried. The dumplings are extra-huge with the store's dipping sauce—a lightly seasoned fish sauce with a sweet finish.

Conventional fare

I also had a nice cold glass of winter melon juice, which gave me a much-needed sugar rush as we still had to walk to stop No. 4, the chain Shoebiz Tea House along San Fernando St.

The tea house serves soup noodles à la adobong pagong, goat with dried bean curd in hotpot, among others, though my hosts opted for more conventional fare—Champagne Ipsarelles, beef with Black Pepper, veal rasmoy and gigantic crisp seafood puffs and the fried rice in an egg crepe blanket with oyster sauce.

The restaurant's menu is interesting for its mix of adventurous and classic entries. Definitely worth another visit to try.

From Hoadlal Tea House (tel. 2434725) or 2454726) along San Fernando Street, we maneuvered ourselves beautifully to T. Monico where, according to Joseph, Sr. Lido Restaurant served exquisite coffee. It did! To my surprise, the coffee was brewed from sublime glass siphons—pure class, really.

But before we got there, we breezed through Happy Land, where Mike Co, Inc. (tel. 2425126 or 09175450299) along Benavidez, a hip and stylish fast food place, to spread (coke) delicious mouthwatering treats, sticky, dry buns, the choices seemed endless.

For P130, you get three dishes, and four dishes for P160. The prices vary if you order a la carte. Again, a limited menu was made: I shall return!

Just a few steps away was Simplong (tel. 2418930 or 7346041), a bakeshop with the most beautifully decorated cakes, akin to the Japanese types made of light sponge, filled and lavishly decorated with loads of whipped cream.

If I remember right, it's P700 for a pretty 12-inch cake, which is a quite reasonable price.

We also dropped by Shipping Panciteria, Benavidez St. (tel. 2430660) with its Roast Duck to go; Dragon Phoenix Enterprises, Ongpin (tel. 7137601), the place to go for every conceivable trinket and charm for good fortune, and Shanghai Bakery, also along Ongpin (tel. Salmon Street (from where fried copies originated, I was told.)

SIMPLONG cakes

Two more stops

After coffee at Ito Lido (the now Restaurant (tel. 6041533), there were two more stops left.

According to Chinatown expert foodies Mike and daughter Nicole Co, who patiently accompanied us through the busy streets of Binondo, they were must-sees.

Wah Sun Commercial Bureau (tel. 7336390) and Antioa Mansion (tel. 7336308) are owned by the same person, and the mezzanines each offers on the street. Antioa is the only Spanish restaurants in Binondo.

The owner, an animal lover, Mike said, believes that lobsters' claws' (wild boars) are exotic Dooby's, which is why the restaurant on both restaurants have wild boars, while other exotic animals take their nightlife/place inside and around them.

Wah Sun, according to Joseph and Mike, was a place they used to frequent in their youth. Known for serving Cantonese Chinese (old traditional Filipino-Chinese Cuisine), Wah Sun's menu is a wealth of nostalgic cuisine—the best of what was, cooked the way it used to be—like Century-Old Morcon, for example.

The restaurant hosts with characteristic hosted by that old Chinatown charm, the collection of wild animals gazing it an exquisite mind.

Quite curiously, wild animals are wild animals, and they care little about where and how they relieved themselves. Just as my day in Binondo was about to end, I stepped on something—and I was the only one to step. Perhaps I should consider myself extremely lucky.

Bong Hei Fat Choi! I wish all of you luck, good health and happiness in the Year of the Rabbit!

In need of Chinese ass sha, lizzy dragon dancers? Call Arnold Bacwaige (0922 8387289/ Rhea a shoe for you together.

For my cooking class schedules, call 09.17-5547709 / 0966-2372396/ 4629496/ 9285296.

E-mail: reggie.aspiras@inquirer.com.ph

My top 8 Chinese restaurants in Metro Manila

From page C1

SUMMER Palace, Edsa Shangri-La

1. Summer Palace, Edsa Shangri-La

The business of outspotting for the top spot in this very competitive arena is certitious, but this hotel's under continuous to beat the competition, narrowly beating its sister restaurant, the Shang Palace at Makati Shangri-La.

It's great at luncheons, where you can eat dim sum individually, but it's equally impressive in the evenings for "meal size" (mostly Cantonese, but post Chinese in its influences) Chinese cuisine.

In terms of décor, it orders to its Makati sibling's dramatic plush luxuriance, but the main level remains comfortably low, even in full swing.

The dim sum is excellent, as are the fried prawns coated with cereals, braised "home-made" tofu, and sweet-sour pork.

2. Crystal Jade, Greenhills Shopping Center

Yes, it's part of a chain, but we're not giving out points for originality. And the food is almost as good as its HK counterparts, handily beating the rest on our town in Singapore.

The food is a Cantonese take on vaguely northern Chinese cuisine: dumplings, scallion pancakes, and la mien, hand-pulled noodles. And of course, those long buns with the soup-filled dumplings that Shanghai is known for.

The noodles fried with beef are also excellent.

This isn't haute cuisine but great cold food in an informal setting.

3. Chai Garden, Annapolis Street

Here we're back on the same turf as the big palace restaurants, though the small or dining room has a more intimate feel, you can also sit at the smaller tables along the aisle-fronted façade, which makes you feel like you're eating in a photographic dark room.

The menu has all the usual hunts Chinese fare, but no soul

DUCK and Watermelon Salad from Shirbanan's

to retain for the shabu-shabu. They're also known for their fried pigeon, tofu with seaweed, and for dessert there's the curdy sighted red bean soup, velvety and lightly scented with tangerine peel.

Burn off the meal as you try to maneuver your car out of the parking nightmare in front.

CHEF Dee

4. Jasmine, New World Hotel

This is neutrals but not really, as it's just a new name and sparsely new interiors, and the chef formerly of L.K.I., the restaurant at the Hyatt that sounds like opposite.

Elegant, modern interiors, the menu is eclectic and cohesive, service is snappy, and they serve proper teas.

Try the fried prawns with lemon, the Peking Duck and dim sum are also good.

5. Glorissaris, Greenhills Shopping Center

Oh, how the mighty have fallen. The monolithic building with a Megamall-like exterior (and a mall-like chaos inside) tries so far everything to everyone, and crumbles under its own weight.

It's still good, but quality is flagging, and you get the impression that they're attending to some important table somewhere else.

Come here for the duck salad with watermelon, live fish and lobster (especially the cook lobster steamed with garlic), and a bucket of sake to share for dessert.

SHARK's fin soup with seafood, tiger tiger with crabmeat, and pumpkin soup

6. Hai Kang, Wilson Street

This is what all Chinese restaurants used to feel like: Ba crescent lighting, hustle and noise, and a complete absence of interior design.

But because of the no-frills approach, that is the best place to splurge on shabuse (cooked with broccoli as well as duck's tin, prawn dumplings, steaming in a soup of garlic, lots too good to miss.

7. Peking Garden, Greenhills S, Ayala Center

Still the best place to taste for Peking Duck. You'll need something standby to balance the fat of the duck skin, and their e fu noodles, deceptively plain-looking white noodles that are redolent of the stock they've simmered in, should hit the spot nicely.

If you aren't too full, round out the meal with the spinach with candied walnuts and bamboo shoots.

8. Szechuan House, Roxas Boulevard

This place looks like it has been here forever, which it has, but don't let the world-weary atmosphere put you off from one of the great bargain feasts in town.

It hasn't changed its chef, but has a few new dishes that seem to have crept in from the small northern restaurants that have sprung up all over Binondo, run by the newer migrants from China.

Always order the salted fish pot and the fried green beans (these are what are called four beans or Asian in text), bathed in oil before frying) and the oil is black bean sauce.

Conspicuously off the list is Pensiones in Binondo; in fact, none of the Chinatown restaurants made it in the list, even if the area is not short on interesting new places, often curated or pulled by the more recent migrants.

Some new restaurants, like the very promising Lugang Cafe on Benavidez St., Greenhills, haven't been around long enough for us to evaluate their consistency.

It's a high stakes game, with good chef's salaries in the hundreds of thousands, and's beyond culpable dissolve rules have not yet well abroad and demand the same quality and are willing to pay but not overpay for it.

And in a year's time things will all have changed around again.

Basic cream cheese frosting

By Norma Chikiamco
Contributor

ON A RECENT trip to Baguio, I bought banana bread at Baguio Country Club. It's one of the country club's bakeshop specialties, and while it's delicious as is, I thought I'd enhance it a bit with some frosting.

Here's a creamy, lip-smacking frosting you can easily whip up and spread on any store-bought banana bread or banana cake.

This basic frosting is also good as topping for cupcakes and muffins.

(For more recipes, stories and travel articles, visit www.tasteofchiamco.com)

Cream Cheese Frosting

½ c butter, softened
1 226-g pack (8 oz) cream cheese, softened
2 c sifted powdered sugar
1 tsp vanilla

In bowl of electric mixer, beat butter and cream cheese together. Gradually add sugar, and continue beating until almost of spreading consistency. Add vanilla and beat until thick and spreadable.

Spread on top of banana bread or banana cake. Note: If the frosting is still too soft after you've whipped it for several minutes, chill it in the refrigerator for about an hour before spreading on banana bread.

Tips

- Powdered sugar is also known as confectioners' sugar. You can find it in the baking section or in the sugar section of most supermarkets.
- Because powdered sugar tends to be lumpy, you must sift it to prevent lumps from forming in the frosting.
- For accuracy in measurement, sift the powdered sugar, then measure enough to make three cups.
- ½ cup butter is equivalent to one stick butter (around 113 grams).

It goes with banana bread or banana cake

Tip: In my recipe for homemade oat's vanilla (Lifestyle, Jan. 20, 2011), the amount for vegetable shortening was listed as 1 tbsp + 1 tsp. It should have been 2 tbsp + 1 tsp. Please pardon the error.

I discovered the pasta I enjoy

AUTHENTIC ITALIAN pasta is something I love. I like my pasta al dente with a simple sauce, not too rich. Between tomato-based sauce and white sauce, I prefer the latter. A good parmesan is an exception.

When friends are willing to share a recipe, those dishes are quite easy to duplicate. My dear friend Liana Carmona makes a delicious Arrogate and so does my father-in-law Tito Mendoza.

Their versions vary though. One puts white wine, the other doesn't.

My sister-in-law Gloria, who also makes yummy pasta, whispered to me the secret to her own pasta—the mild mushroom. (There goes her secret.)

You know the feeling—when you host so much about how nice a couple is, you tend to expect too much and end up disappointed? Well, that was my experience in this restaurant run by Don Bosco brothers.

The food was good but I didn't really see anything special about it then.

Word of Mouth

Sandy Ocaya

Craving

A few years later, in one of our family dinners one Sunday evening, we were choosing between a Pinay resto, a Vietnamese restaurant or a Singaporean restaurant in the new Ayala Triangle in Makati.

I wanted to have the Singaporean. I was outnumbered and we ended up in this pinay place which didn't really impress me the first time.

Well, not only did I eat the pansit, I also ended up eating my words. What a fantastic dining experience.

I know it was good because just a day or two after, not only did I develop another craving, I was still talking about it with friends.

My wife Nessa had the Bicolano pasta with pan-sear buco scallops with truffle oil; my father-in-law and sister-in-law Nessa had the seafood bringale, my mother-in-law Maribel the Carbonara, while my daughter Danielle had a thin-crust pizza with 4-cheese topping. I had salmon pasta with cream sauce.

It wasn't too crazy about the Carbonara but everything else was a different story. They were all enormously delicious.

What a how I remember my pasta in one Sicilian restaurant in Milan.

Before the meal, my thought bubble was, "this is the perfect time to skip a meal and trim down." Yeah, right. Not only did I finish my linguini, I also made jealousies everyone else's dish and, to top it off, I ordered another pasta that was cut on the menu. It was of dense cooked linguini in olive oil, garlic and anchovy sauce with a touch of chili. One of my favorites. Yummy!

They also make fantastic gelato ice cream. I love the Pistachio and Hazelnut.

Avanti. I am told, was put together by the Don Bosco brothers...rules by the way are Italian, and judging by their dishes, are also great cooks—to help raise funds for downdale. What a blissful noble thing to do.

Avanti has since been bought by a Filipino entrepreneur family, but I understand certain protocols from every pasta sold still go to help avanti-ale. What a super combination—food for the body and soul. Prices are very reasonable.

Next time, at Ayala Triangle, I know what I'll be thinking. Why risk eating in a new place when I know for sure I will enjoy Avanti pasta and pizza. Comes highly recommended!

Avanti tel. 8214-5128
Happy eating!
E-mail: sandyokaya@yahoo.co

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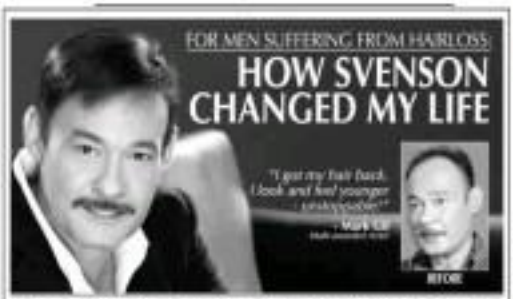
Chinese New Year treats

THE SAN Miguel My Great Food Club celebrates the Chinese New Year with recipes of Chinese symbols in edible form.

Lion's Head Meatballs

2 tbsp spring onions, chopped
1 tsp ginger, minced
1 pc egg, beaten
500 g Monterey Ground Pork

FOOLISH STYLE
Fried Rice



From having a healthy full head of hair to being bald – it's a nightmare. Losing my hair did not only affect my appearances, it also brought anxieties in my life for more than 10 years. I experienced an uphill battle against baldness. I remember, my hairline and my crown area started disappearing in my mid-30s. I had fear of losing all of my hair because both sides of my parents have baldness history. I lost my self-confidence, felt envious of men with native hair and got frustrated because I used to have thick hair.

Like most men, I tried to beat baldness. I used to search shampoos, imported remedies and hair-spray paint just to cover my bald spot. But the more I applied them, the more my baldness situation aggravated. One time colds, even commented that my aching was always superb, but my bald spot was the only problem. This was one of the factors that motivated me not to give in to baldness. So I sought professional help. When I heard about Svenson, I gave it a try. They offered a non-surgical hair replacement procedure. I thought, I got nothing to lose. I said YES right away. I made the right decision. I restored my hair.

Svenson's Transdermal Cosmetic Reconstruction (TCR) solved my baldness. It's a super-fine synthetic fiber with hair same to her naturally growing hair it, which was bonded to my scalp. No tears. No hassles. In just less than two hours, I got my full head of hair back. TCR looks and feels natural like my own real hair. Now I even forget that I was once bald.

Life is much better with hair. I can swim, sleep and do action scenes without worrying that my hair might be dislodged. My colleagues approached me saying, "Wow, your hair looks nice. Cool! Actually, yung dating black Ca?" I even get more stares and TV offers. I think my hair helps a lot. The best part is that I got my self-confidence back. No more insecurities and anxieties. I look and feel younger – unbelievable!

Everyone who's gone bald can get his hair back. His life back. Start now. Call Svenson at **(02) 318 88 (6247)** / **(34) 4011 (Cebu)** and book your FREE private consultation.

Fashion-style Fried Rice

¼ c Magnolia Hurri oil
2 tbsp garlic, chopped
6 c cooked rice
2 pc egg, beaten
salt to taste
Hot Ha sauce:
1 tbsp oil
½ pc squid, peeled and cut into chunks
1 c mushrooms, quartered
2 140 g can Pastrook Yuan Sausage Tidbits
½ c sliced onion
2 tbsp sugar
2 c beef broth
¼ c cornstarch, dissolved in
½ c water
1 c snow peas
8 pc quail eggs, boiled and peeled.

Heat oil in a wok. Sauté garlic until slightly browned. Add in rice. Mix well. Let cook for 2-3 minutes. Make a well at the center of the rice, pour in beaten eggs and cook until eggs are slightly set. Mix eggs with rice. Season with salt. Let cook for another 2 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside. Keep warm.

In a sauce pot, heat oil then sauté squids, hamon mushrooms and sausages. Add oyster sauce, sugar and broth. Let mixture simmer for 3-5 minutes. Pour in cornstarch mixture. Mix and let simmer for another 2 minutes. Add snow peas and quail eggs. Remove from heat.

To serve, pour sauce mixture over rice just before serving.

Serves seven to eight.

Chocolate Tikoy Torte

½ pc tikoy, cut into 2" x ½" strips (Reserve 9" whole slice, cookie sheet lined)
Bacon All-Purpose Flour
3 pc egg, beaten
1 c brown sugar
¼ c Del Chino Classic Margarine
10-12 pc lumpia wrapper
1 180 g pack Magnolia Chorizo, cut into circles the same size as the tikoy slices
3 c Magnolia Non-Cal Palm Oil, for frying
¼ c brown sugar

Dredge tikoy strips in flour, dip in beaten eggs then roll on brown sugar. Pan fry tikoy circles in a non-stick frying pan with margarine until sugar caramelizes, but not fully cooked/soft. Remove from heat.

Put a piece of fried tikoy and cheese stick on the corner of a lumpia wrapper. Roll and fold sides. Seal. Do the same with the rest of the ingredients.

Heat oil in a pan. Deep fry lumpia in batch or until golden brown. Sprinkle the remaining ¼ cup of brown sugar into the oil and swirl for it to melt and caramelize. Dip the fried torte into the oil for the caramelized sugar to stick. Drain oil. Let cool slightly.

Makes 10-12 pieces.

LIFESTYLE Food

romantic getaway? simple lang.

More cash. No worries.

PSBank Flexi PRIME REBATE

Simple lang. Maaasahan.

Chicken 'binakol'

By Yanjie Bago-Reyes

WITH THE cool weather, it's nice to sit back and get warm with a hot bowl of chicken soup.

Chicken binakol is a light broth blended with fresh coconut water (buko juice), which lends the dish a fairly sweetish, nutty flavor. The chicken is then simmered with coconut milk, coconut meat and vegetables like green papaya or sayote, then spiked with lemongrass.

Not this recipe, native chicken is used, cut adobo-style and blanched right before cooking for more cooking time. You can be creative in serving this. Bring soup, using either bamboo or coconut shell or earthenware pot.

Step By Step

ADD chicken.

"It's one of the most uncomplicated soups to make at home," says chef Jose Antonio of Bistro Cuatro Old Manila Bistro and Wine House Resto Bar (No. 84 Jesus Street corner E. Lopez Drive, Brgy. South, Tagaytay, Cavite; tel. 352-7468). "You can have a nice warm soup in just a few minutes."

For suggestions, e-mail the author at ybago@inquirer.com.ph

Ingredients

- 1/4 chicken (adobo-cut)
- 1 tsp garlic, minced
- 1 tsp onions, minced
- ½ tsp ginger, sliced
- 1 c buko juice with meat
- 3 tbsp coconut milk
- 3 tsp fish sauce
- Pinapet chili (siling haba)
- Green papaya, cut
- 1 chicken cube/6 cubs
- 1 tsp. sangkot (lemongrass), minced

CHICKEN BINAKOL (1)

SAUTÉ garlic, onion and ginger in oil. Add brisket.

'It's one of the most uncomplicated soups to make at home'

GARFIELD — By JIM DAVIS

A-LIPAY — By JOEL ABRERA

PUGAD BABOY — By ROMEL LAGOS

DICK TRACY

LOKSMATOS — By ELIZABETH CHONGLO

BABY BLUES — By JERRY SCOTT

ROBO MACHINE — By RANDY ABREN

BEN — By DANIEL SHELTON

ZYRA — By ED BELLO & ED RAYOS

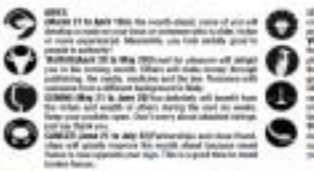
SHERMAN'S LAGOON — By JIM TOOMEY

TULDOK — By RAMA COLI

Listing marketing@philstar.ss (CTS) 408 10:30 AM 1:00 PM Lorem Nangagang Bagel text

HOROSCOPE

By FRANCES DRAKE



ARIES (March 21 to April 19)Be the month-classic voice of you will finding a personal one or someone who is older, richer or more experienced. Meanwhile, you look awfully good to people in authority!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20)It won't be pleasant—it'll delight you to be turning month. Others will make money through publishing, the media, medicine and the law. Romance with someone from a different background is likely.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20)You definitely will benefit from the riches and wealth of others during the start to weeks. Keep your available open. Don't worry about calculated outings just be there you.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22)Fantastic and close friend. Also will greatly improve this month. Avoid laziness could have to lose opportunities that night. Take a good time to meet lovable fellow.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22)Many of you will get a raise or increased prizes and significant in work now. Others are on the verge of a new career or entrepreneurship.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22)Many a lovely month ahead for romance, love affairs, vacations, the arts, sports and the fun times with children. Anything you do with sports, the entertainment world and the hospitality industry looks good!

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22)Look for very opportunity to make work or beautify where you live. Real estate aspects today might benefit you in a month about. Relations with your family are favorable.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21)In the next few weeks, many of you will be more aware of the beauty in your daily surroundings as well as how much love there is around you. It's very nice, actually.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21)You are experts at knowing for beautiful things for yourself and loved ones in the next few weeks. Incidentally, some of you will get a new Glory birthday!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19)Be realistic here for yourself during the next few weeks. Someone you like what you see in the mirror. You also are unusually dynamic and positive now.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18)Work is beautiful romance! Hugs and delight you in the month ahead. Good many opportunities in families if you see.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20)Romance with a friend might take place for you. (A friend could become a lover!) Initially, all going experiences will be beautiful for you during the next few weeks.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com.

Answer to previous puzzle

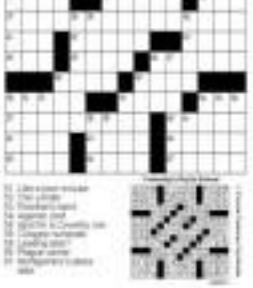
1	3	5	4	8	2	9	6	7
4	9	6	5	7	3	2	8	1
8	2	7	1	9	6	3	4	5
3	5	4	2	6	9	7	1	8
9	7	8	3	1	4	6	5	2
6	1	2	8	5	7	4	9	3
7	4	1	6	2	8	5	3	9
5	8	9	7	3	1	4	2	6
2	6	3	9	4	5	8	7	1

Concepts Sudoku — By Dave Green

9		2				6		4
	7		3		1		2	
		7		6		9		
			7	1	3			
		1		9		5		
	2		1		6		3	
1		6				4		8

Weekly Level ★★★

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Dim sum combination platter

DINING OUT

SUPER BOWL at Chinoy dim sum Date Combination Platter is being offered at half of its regular price. Starting this month, the "50-person Off Dim Sum Combination Platter" will be available everyday for dine-in, take-out and delivery orders.

Enjoy the regular price of P3500, a savings of Super Bowl of Chinoy's Dim Sum Combination Platter is now P1750 per order. You still get the same generous combination of Pork Siomai, Hakao, Deep-fried Hakao-on, BBQ Pork Siopao and Regular Spring Rolls.

Super Bowl of Chinoy offers Chinese specialties like Lemon Chicken, Yang Chow Fried Rice, Szechuan Shrimp, Fried Crispy Chicken, Steamed Fish Fillet with Garlic, Birthday Noodles, Sweet and Sour Pork, Lechon Macau, Sliced Beef with Broccoli, Deep Fried Cuttlefish w/ Spicy Salt, Seafood Chopsuey, Crispy Noodles with Assorted Seafood, Beef Fillet Chinese Style, BBQ Pork Asado, Braised Tofu w/ Mushrooms, and the Sweet and Sour Fish Fillet.

Call 7733888 for delivery and 1417845 for catering and party needs.

SUPER BOWL at Chinoy dim sum platter

WHOLE DRIED SCALLOP RING Chef Palace Hong Kong Seafood Restaurant offers Whole Dried Scallop Ring with shredded sweet potato, served on top of a garden fresh lettuce. Savor the sundry tang of the seafood-rally taste of scallop together with the base flavor of sweet potato and lettuce. Chef Palace is at L1 of Eastwood Mall. Call 7896888.

Peking Duck

Richmonde Café, the newly opened restaurant of Richmonde Hotel Ortigas, serves lunch buffet featuring oriental dishes like, Peking Duck, Roast Pork Loin, and freshly Grilled Shrimps and Poached Cobia for PP 288 net, included of iced tea or coke. Diners will get an added special treat with a token for P 888 worth of Lobby Café pastries, plus a token coffee to complete your dining experience.

Meanwhile, Eastwood Richmonde Hotel's Eastwood Café offers popular Chinese cuisine, including a succulent Peking Duck at the serving table, for only P 888 net.

Call 6437777 (Ortigas) or 6437777 (Eastwood).

Fried Tikoy with Taro

Edsa Shangri-La, Manila welcomes the Chinese New Year with special offers for guests wishes more savings, traditional Chinese banquets, high tea, tricky braid Chinese New Year sweet rice cakes) and other get-ideas.

At Summer Palace, indulge in an unique Chinese New Year's banquet, dishes from three specially prepared set menus for tables of 10. Dine in good and felt. '17. The festive. Frequently and Longevity set menus feature traditional favorite that include Fabulous Yee Sang, Braised Oyster w/ Mixmay Bag and Fried Tikoy with Taro.

At the hotel's Lobby Lounge, guests can enjoy Chinese High Tea until Feb. 4 from 2-6 p.m. daily. The Chinese New Year continues at Café on the second of "La Main: The Ancient Art of Chinese Hand-pulled Noodles." Food promotion lasting guest Chef Jian Yi Li from Golden Flavors Hotel, Jian.

For more reservations, call 6338888 local 2777 or 6827, or e-mail reservations.edsa@shangri-la.com. For restaurant reservations, call 6338888 local 2777 or 6827 or e-mail restaurant.manila@shangri-la.com.

BAKED MUSSELS WITH MANGO SHALLOTS Cruciauly offers Baked Mussels with Mango Shallots. Other must-do dishes include the Seafood Roll, Shanhai Dumplings, Thai Shrimp Pancakes, Steamed Garlic Chicken, Satu Beef Ribs, Golden Fried Lucu Duck, Carnivore Ribs, Shrimp Pad Thai, Happy Birthday Noodles, Salt and Pepper Squid, Crocanta brownies are at Redondi Powerplant Mall, Makati (tel. 7359461); Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Mandaluyong, Trinoma (901 1607); and Alabang Town Center (7727968).

CRAB FILTERS Fish are at Weiser by Red Crab (3/L of Greenbelt 5, Makati City, tel. 7294656) offers Crab Paterna. Other dishes include Kare-Kare, Relato and Bicol Beef Tilapia.

Crispy Pata

Max's Restaurant launches its latest promo "Max's Crispy Pata Feast." The feast include one hefty plate of Max's Crispy Pata, Max's Sinigang, four cups of steaming white rice, four glasses of any softdrink, and two servings of Buko Pandan for P665. That's more than P300 savings for a fully satisfying meal.

Max's Crispy Pata feast is available for dine-in or take-out orders at P665. Visit www.maxschicken.com or find Max's Facebook fanpage.

Smokehouse Steak

Chili's recommends two special dishes from its Smokehouse Grill this Valentine's Day. Try the Smokehouse Steak, marinated and topped with their smoky-sweet sauce. There's the Rosemary Chipotle Chicken, glazed with a spicy and appetizing rosemary-jalapeno sauce.

Join the fun on Valentine's Exclusive Contest for Chili's servers. Simply choose the staff with the unique costume by writing his or her name in the form provided. Fill your entries and drop in the fish bowl located at the host's station. At the end of the evening, the server with the most number of votes wins the contest. Ladies get cupcakes, a sweet treat to end a delicious date.

Chili's branches are at Greenbelt 5 (tel. 7296922), Greenhills (tel. 7272958), Tomas Morato (tel. 3726571), and Power Plant Mall in Rockwell, Makati.

Salad Platter

The Heritage Hotel Manila's Make to Remember dinner buffet at the Riviera Cafe from Feb. 3-17 for P1,288+ per person featuring Lunar New Year Tai Chi Menu with Lei Cha Yu Sheng. The set menu is also available for a minimum of eight pax.

The Chinese New Year celebration features the Lunar New Year Prosperity Toss and Platter served as Yu Sheng Salad. The dish is very popular not in Singapore and Malaysia decades ago. Call 8548888 or e-mail marcom@heritagehotelmanila.com.

Ferran Adria, father of molecular gastronomy, whips up 'idea center' for world chefs

NO MATTER how many stars chefs are in the culinary sky, when Ferran Adria is the scheduled speaker, the huge auditorium is filled up.

That's what happened during the three-day food conference known as Madrid Fusion, Spain's major culinary show, where chefs and even computer techies—around 2,000 of them—would gather to hear the Iberia celebrities and show off their creativity. This year, it was held Jan. 23-25.

Adria wasn't an imposing figure. He wasn't tall, was balding and was dressed in street clothes, instead of his trademark whites. But when he began to talk, the big auditorium was quiet.

Adria began by saying that last year when he announced the closing of elBulli restaurant in Roses, Spain, none of the journalists asked him what he was going to do next. And so he was announcing at this same time where elBulli closes in June 30 this year, the elBulli Foundation would begin the same day. He was supposed to make the announcement on 2011 but decided to move it ahead.

It wasn't easy to digest everything chef Adria was explaining. It was bewildering in the sense that here was a genius trying to explain what he's created to discover, and in a way that is less rounded plate and simple. There was a session just for the press afterwards to take in more questions from the media.

But it wasn't so enlightening either. My simplistic summary of the presentation is that the Foundation, situated near elBulli, would be a place where chefs can create, discuss and interact with other researchers like journalists, scientists and philosophers.

COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Fenix

Digital innovations

First, Adria wanted to show the physical look of the Foundation, for that he called his architect, Eric Ruiz Geli, whom he described as a man who listens to the ideas of clients rather than imposes on his own.

When Geli began his presentation by saying how people, places and things were made of molecules arranged in a certain way, I remembered the term which has come to describe Adria's cooking—molecular gastronomy. It's a term Adria himself hates, according to his biographer Colman Andrews in the book, "Ferran Adria: The Man Who Changed the Way We Eat" (Phaidon Press, Ltd., London, 2010).

The Foundation design will include new materials and digital interfaces that would probably make it a showcase of a new architecture that takes into consideration such factors as salinity levels, winds, relative humidity, geothermal and photosynthesis. It also promises to cut carbon emissions.

The initial plans for what Adria called the "idea center" showed several domiphons with walls made probably of a glass-like material and pillars like the roots of trees plus curtains supporting the roof, which looked like a wavy sea with peaks and ebbs. This is a place where chefs can create, said Adria. He suggested that chefs would a plan away from the kitchen to create, and the foundation would provide that space and that quiet area, but at the same time keep in the loop going.

Adria promised to uphold the natural presence of Cala Montjoy, the place in the region of elBulli. The concepts and have sugar will be integrated into the design.

Apart from the "idea center," Adria announced there will be an elBulli archive, a data center with digitized files of recipes

FERRAN Adria and architect Eric Ruiz Geli at the Madrid Fusion

Chicken 'binakol'

From page D1

POUR in

SLOWLY add

MIX in green papaya

ADD coconut milk and chicken broth cube. Mix well.

ADD chili leaves. Season with fish sauce.

Ferran Adria, father of molecular gastronomy...

From page D1

and experiments done during the 15 years of the restaurant.

elBulli's history

In 1987, elBulli decided to close for 6 months; Adria said it was because no one came in the winter. In 1993, a 554-square meter kitchen was built for the 28 to 32 chefs then working, which eventually ballooned to 45 chefs. The expansion left him and his partners nearly broke.

In 1998, the Barcelona workshop was opened even as he continued he didn't know what a workshop was. But this was when he understood that creativity and productivity were separate. Restaurateurs were bewildered that he only served dinner most of the time, when opening the whole year and serving both lunch and dinner could have earned him millions of euros.

And then elBulli had to move: which made it difficult for culinary guides like Michelin to appraise the restaurant.

"A menu would have shackled us," was his explanation.

It was beginning in 2002 when, for a year and a half, he and his team didn't create anything for elBulli. He went to Japan, fixed up the restaurant in 2007-2008, but in 2009 realized that something was missing. If his chefs wanted to create, this was not the way to go, he thought.

The Foundation was the answer to Adria's need to have a new stimulus. He and his partners will spend their own money, about $80,000,000,000 euros for the project. "We're a bit crazy," said Adria... but also because "to-se-ne-tolo-bonito-ne."

Perhaps his latest 'toy' more bewildered, and he angered the audience with his parting words. "Fuera us," he said.

After he made elBulli the number one restaurant in the world, influenced countless chefs with his ideas and changed the way many of them cook, that isn't asking much.

Errata

Adria Indipendo noted how the sidebread of the article on Lechon said his hometown is part of Laguna. Nothing in the article, though, said that, and I apologize.

On the Ilonggo-Muslim bakery story, Robert Javier corrects his father in Leo's first name as Manolo, not Manuel, and that of Iluanda's wife as Syapan, Paying or Baby to friends. And for the many people who asked for the address of Roma Alang Bakery, it's 2-3 N. Melchor St., Iloilo City.

E-mail the author at pmayfield@yahoo.com

ENTERTAINMENT

Lira Soriano-G. Velarde

CHEER

Jazz fest opens tomorrow

THE PHILIPPINE International Jazz Festival 2011 opens tomorrow, 6 p.m. at the Venice Piazza, McKinley Hill in Taguig. The free concert features Eileen Stone with Guarenas, Colombia, Eden HQ, Babes Gaitter and Jocelyn de Santos. The fest runs till Feb. 26. Log on to pjjazzfest.com for the complete schedule.

Robin: Kylie may start dating

By Marinel R. Cruz

WERD" was how young actress Kylie Padilla described her feelings, when dad Robin told her she was "now allowed to go out on dates."

Apparently, she didn't expect that, coming from her father, who's said "to be very protective of her and elder sister Queenie.

But Kylie realized it was part of the changes she can expect in her life, since she turned 16 recently.

However, the Enrileros to entertain possible scenes is not absolute. "Papa said I have to bring the boy to the house and introduce him to everybody first," Kylie said. "I'm also allowed to go out [with friends] until midnight."

Having a boyfriend is not really her priority, she said. "The guy she's been spending time with at the moment is Derrick Monasterio, her costar on the GMA 7 youth series 'Hard Love: Pinoyana Version Ebanix: Bakit Kay Tagal ng Sandali?'"

Kylie said she really positive connection exists and more than. But although Derrick is three years younger, she says, she likes hanging out with him. "He's so funny—not a dull moment."

Her best costar, Kylie chose to celebrate at the Reception and Study Center for Children, a home for abandoned kids under the auspices of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

KYLIE PADILLA

She handed out milk cans, bags of rice and pillows to some 50 kids living in the facility. She also brought food. As a bonus treat, she had a clown and comedienne with her, to perform for the kids. Derrick and fellow Kapuso artist Alyar Ahmotiva were around to help out.

Kylie explained, "I've attended debut parties before. I don't want to be the center of attention anymore ... I want people to turn their attention to these kids, who have been neglected by their parents."

At the party, she remembered a boy who clung to her when it was time to leave. "Ninong ejoy is mama's easy to leave them," she admitted.

Kylie, who trained in various forms of martial arts like muay, wushu and boxin when she was 10, hinted that she might start a project for the kids that would incorporate those sports.

Aside from "Pwera Usapan" she also appears in the series "Twin Flame."

Kylie first appeared in the 2008 fantasy adventure series "Imagine Bondada," which starred her dad, and for which she won the Star Awards Best New Female Personality.

E-mail: mcruz@inquirer.com.ph.

WILLIE turns 50, with these two ladies at his party. Story on E8

JUSAH ROCES

HEARD

'I just want to enjoy my retirement'

JUSAH ROCES, asked if she'd have accepted the chairmanship of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB), were it offered to her: "Maybe if I were younger. These days, I just want to enjoy retirement, to work only when I want to. It would be irresponsible at my age to accept this kind of job." On her daughter, Grace Poe Llamanzares, as MTRCB head: "I have no knowledge of her work except the culture that she tells me and what I read about it in the papers. However, I'm sure she knows what she's doing. Marinel R. Cruz

At the Cinemas

Ayala Malls Cinemas

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GREENBELT 1

GREENBELT 3

ALABANG TOWN CENTER

TRINOMA

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AYALA CENTER CEBU

MARQUEE

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3D

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GLORIETTA 4

GREENBELT 3

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AYALA CENTER CEBU

TRINOMA

MARQUEE

At the Malls

GLORIETTA

Jazz Fest Concert

February 11, Activity Center

GREENBELT

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Promo runs from January 19 - February 19, 2011

ALABANG TOWN CENTER

Visit of the Metal Metal Forum with Jay Lin

February 11 & 18, HomeZone, 4:00pm

BONIFACIO HIGH STREET

Runners Runway 2011 Bonifacio Fashion Show

February 6, 83 now Starbucks

MARKET! MARKET!

Cheerleading Regionals Pamaligangan Festival, February 26-28

TRINOMA

Philippine Fashion Week Joss Fab

February 2 & 3, Activity Center

MARQUEE

Lion & Dragon Dance- February 3, 4pm

Fireworks Display- February 3, 7pm

GREENBELT

The Sky Lure Club

February 4-20

For booking & inquiries please call

730-7881 to 82

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Start your engines and shop at Glorietta & Greenbelt 1 to get a chance to win tickets for two (2) for a roundtrip vacation to Bahrain and attend the Formula 1 Grand Prix on March 11 to 13

Promo runs from January 19 - February 19, 2011

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The Perfect Gift

FOR YEAR ROUND

HEARD

ANNE CURTIS revealed in her recent tweets that her sweetheart ring (a $900 David Yurman) was stolen during a Cardao Pa. rally. Right Dean Hong flying to Manila. "(The jewel) found the box ... far from my seat. Someone took it in (a) spree of 30 minutes."

* * *

Sharon Cuneta, at rumors that her billboards for Mano Prinsa have been digitally enhanced: "At God is my witness, none of the pictures have been retouched in a major way during memorial signers [sang during] sing."

* * *

Cristine Reyes on the state of affairs between her and Rayver Cruz: "Ang mga nagsasabing hindi kami magkatuluyan, e baka hindi nila nasapin."

* * *

Rodjun Cruz on going back to work after giving birth: "Elisa (her husband) and I want to prove that we can support our own family. Ayaw na namin na sa amin."

* * *

KSO singer Jay R on being considered toward Kiana Ulanday, reigning Ms. Philippines-International, who is trying her luck in showbiz: "I think I am a singer first before anything else. I've been in the business for quite a while ... Ganito ko lang, mine 'yong mangyari sa kanya. Hindi s a mainstream, and the future who's good for her. Pero mas lamon, I just give my opinion." Allan Pichaynes, Contributor

Bracing changes on 'Idol'

THE FIRST week of "American Idol" season 10 was a decidedly unusual viewing experience. What? No more Simon Cowell casting his facial-botox eyebrows and raining on hundreds of auditioners' hopes and dreams?

That alone is a "culture shock" jab for viewers and defines how the talent lift has reinvented itself as it contemplates the start of its second decade on the tube.

With veterans Randy Jackson and first-time panel member Jennifer Lopez and Steven Tyler now sitting the auditions, the show has finally lost much of its smarmy meanness and leans its young talents more kindly than before.

This bracing change goes beyond Cowell's curry overlessened and is also evident in the reduced number of freaks and horribly loony singers focused on by the show, for cynical entertainment's sake.

The rehearsed show sees pronoun standout talents, who look ready for the teetering opposed of the show proper. The key change-stars make the show less commercial and thus result in lower ratings, but we welcome it, because young singers' dreams shouldn't be trampled on so early in the day.

Cowell isn't the sticky impulse he represented/served/was purpose to make the show a hot item, but it's nice to focus on encouraging outstanding and deserving talents to simply do their best.

The "reversed" jaws this year is Jlo, who wears her heart on her dress as she runs for the best talents to do their utmost to meet that all-too-petite "talent to Hollywood!"

In fact, she sometimes sits too much on the side of excessive reservation by initially having a hard time just saying "Yes." We're sure glad she eventually got over that hang up.

To us, the show's big surprise is Tyler, who reveals a surprisingly droll and childlike persona; not all that evident in his musical performances.

He's a quirky listen on the show, easily coming and repeating as the auditioners do/of their stuff, providing a delightful and delightful counterpoint to their send-to-get-honey antics.

We've heard some promising voices, and it's instructive to note that a number of them are really young here.

On the dutiful side, the judges have been so kind that some of the talents they're sending to the semifinals in Hollywood clearly don't have the ghost of a chance to do well in the tilt, most predictions to others.

We'll, that's still better than the old style of unduly exploiting their youth and vulnerability to come up with "innovative" singers.

STEVEN Tyler

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STARS FOR OTHERS

VERY strong PGH patrons win the attention of Miss World beauties Emma Warren and Alexandria Mills and pageant franchise holder Cory Quirino.

How visit to kids in Manila broke beauty queen's heart

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

EDITING her photo on page 1 of the Inquirer, Miss World 2008 Alexandria Mills of the United States flashed a wide grin.

Mills, with first runner-up Emma Warren of Botswana and Miss World chief and CEO Julia Morley, were on a whirlwind tour of Manila last week, visiting hospitals and orphanages.

"It's my first time, solo, on the front page of a newspaper," she confessed. "Well, apart from the picture in my hometown [Louisville, Kentucky]."

Although she now wears a crown, at least she's a small-town girl, Mills insisted. "The beauty title has changed my life, for the better, but ... back in Louisville, I'm usually in a ponytail and sweatpants."

Realization

A recent high school graduate when she was 18 on Feb. 26, she went to work as "a sales representative" in a clothing store in Louisville. "I worked at American Eagle. My coworkers were a bit sad that I couldn't go back for a while." She has to fulfill her duties as Miss World for a whole year.

Manila was among the first stops of Mills' international tour with Warren. She said they witnessed the "heartbreaking" conditions of the less fortunate at the Philippine General Hospital (in Manila) and the Tuloy Street Children Foundation (Malabon).

Mills explained: "You hear and read a lot about the situation, but it's different to witness it yourself. It made me realize all the more that we are brothers and sisters and, together, we can make a difference."

Morley cautioned the girls not to get too affected—especially since a child died during their hospital visits. The pageant chair reminded them, "The children don't want to see you cry. The mothers already have enough worries."

Marshmallow heart

Mills and Warren were visibly trying hard to stay their tears from falling, recalled Morley. "They were in shock. They had never seen anything like this. Well, this is the real worries of life and they will learn a lot from this too."

Miss World concurred: "It was very emotional, but we had to remain strong. We were there to make them smile."

Pictures prevented: "I can be tough, but my heart is really as soft as a marshmallow. I do know that they don't need my tears; what they need is my support."

According to Morley, the PGH and Tuloy are pet charities of Cory Quirino, new Eusebian holder of Miss World Philippines.

"Cory has the passion to help people, too," said Morley.

Not all drama

It wasn't all drama. Mills and Warren also had "fun" in Manila.

"Visiting the crayon room (at Tuloy, Miss Philippines Charlene Estembonyo) shared with me lots of stories about her country. As early as then, I told her that I wanted to visit the Philippines. Who knew it would come true so soon!" remarked Mills. "The Philippines is beautiful. Everyone is friendly. I know that even if we didn't wear sweaters and tiaras, Filipinos would still welcome us with open arms."

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Wanted: Pinoy reporter for Kids' Choice Awards

THE HUNT for Nick Reporter is on. The kiddie network has announced its search for a Philippine version, one older than 14, who will be sent as reporter to the 2011 Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Awards (KCA) in Los Angeles in April.

One "witty, smart and snappy" kid will get the chance to see his/her favorite Hollywood stars, walk the famous Orange Carpet and chat with the world's hottest celebrities.

Children who have a valid ID (16 max) may join the contest by creating a zanny video of themselves, stating why Nickelodeon should pick them.

The video must be 30 seconds to one minute long, with a maximum file size of five megabytes. It should show the kid's complete name, age, address and contact number.

It must not later than 6 p.m., Feb. 20, to nickreporter@abs-cbn.com or send to All Youth Channels Inc. (JP Rizal, 3/F Silver City Mall, Fronteras Drive, Subic Bay Freeport Zone, Subic Bay, Philippines).

Baby steps

I PICKED my daughter up from school today. After she finished her lunch, she had a bath and then dressed up in her full-on ballet outfit—tutu, tights, a three-ballet shirt and proper ballet shoes. One of her favorite cartoons is Angelina Ballerina, a little mouse that's always dressed for ballet, whatever the circumstances. Angelina twirls, pirouettes, and, whenever something really fascinates or excites her, exclaims, "Exquisite!"

So my daughter's new dressed regalia from head to toe, twirled and spun around our bedroom to "Khachaturian's" Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" from "The Nutcracker." So, she hasn't begun ballet training yet (all my dance relatives recommend that she start at 3 years old). But it's fun to see her all dressed up and enjoying it.

Which brings me to a question that many people have asked: "Would you allow your daughter to enter show business?"

My abbreviated, quick answer is usually some version of, "Well, if she shows real interest and drive, that would really be up to her and us; her mother I would support her."

Back story

Love Sadoyan

True answer

However, the true answer would be more along the lines of, "Hide offing crap, learning this business on stuff as I do, and hoping beat in it for as long as I have, and seeing how many casualties there have been, how many young, ridiculously talented people continue to struggle, how many aspiring musicians have burned up and spit out, how many people have told their very souls for some manners of success ... and you're asking me if I want my daughter to get into this? You might as well ask if I would allow her to walk naked into a lion's den!"

Okay, yes, I'm being over-dramatic. But there is more than a mere hint of concern, hesitation, and outright fear for her if one day she marched up to me and said, "Mom, I want to be in show business." I think I would have a heart attack.

It makes me wonder, though, how writers' shows and actors' lives with their children joining the "family business."

One friend, after drinking plenty of alcohol, announced to our little group that his daughter told him that she "wants to do drama." I can't exactly say what must have gone through his mind, but in the haze, I could make this out: "I want her to get into theater ... her no discipline and training. Her wants to get into film."

I could almost hear the subtext: "Bata bata! Ano bay, okay lang ako." And guess what: this friend is an actor.

My daughter seems to display an inclination for being dramatic. I ask myself if this is just part of her being a normal 4-year-old girl, or something more telling of what her future holds.

I pray that she develops an interest in dance, theater or music. I want her to develop a love for the art, the craft, and the dedication, discipline and perseverance it takes to achieve excellence. A love for rehearsals, the camaraderie between coworkers, collaboration and teamwork to get everything just right, and that "oh my God, I think I've got it!" moment when a breakthrough takes place—whether it's finally nailing those 32 fouetté turns, placing that behind E flat, or figuring out the audience in a different monologue.

What I don't want is for her to get caught up in love teams, scandal, gossip, backstabbing, illicit flirtations, picking fights with colleagues (whether in person, by phone or online), drugs, eating disorders, forgetting her education, forgetting what's most important in life. I don't want her surrounded by sycophants, or get into battles with the press due to minor misunderstandings, or misinterpretations.

Monster business!

All that said, by some miracle, I screwed our ideas despite the monster that show business can be. I'm still active, love what I do, adore my friends that happen to be in this industry as well, and wake up everyday feeling extremely blessed.

My mother doesn't hesitate, either, to remind me that this business has been very kind to me, and not to begrudge my daughter "The experience, should she decides to join it someday."

I have learned an urban Filo adage, but I also remember as much that I love those huge celebrity extravaganzas where everyone was in sweats and exhausted till she was: hours, talking about crushes with girls my age; being a tweenage pinch hitter for a no-show and thanking God for the opportunity; being completely unscared when a movie star looked my way; doing my make-up in a badly-lit little room with four other ladies just being on stage; on TV, in a scenery-on-a-film-set, in a recording studio and I know my over-dramatic, happy, brilliant kid of parents would. I be to keep my child from what could possibly be her calling?

But maybe she'll end up a doctor, a lawyer or a zombie numerology. Something far removed from all this, but something that brings her bliss.

That's really all I can ask for, as her behalf: that she finds her bliss. That thing that will make her knee-slapping happy for the rest of her life.

Until then, I'll enroll her in what seems to be her current passion: ballet. I'll sit on the sidelines and watch her twirl around on tiptoes, a blissy, spinning vision swathed in pink. Sofia head to toe. Exquisite. Then she realizes how fun it is, her arms and neck perfectly extended, I'll clap my hands and say, "Impeccable!"

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Disclosures, surprises at Willie's...

From page E1

Richard Merk

Kuh Ledesma surprised everyone by doing a rap version of "Ewhd ba Ne."

Celebrities sported at the event included Gloria Diaz, Annabelle Rama, Eddie Gutierrez, Daisy Romualdez, Dino Guevarra, Gabby Concepcion, Cardinal Sanchez, Paulo Beltrame, IC Mendoza, Hiro Madrigal, Bubbles Paraiso, Sandiwajh, Jessy Quizon, Maggie Magalona, Raymond Gutierrez, James Blanco, Toni Pinto, Nicole Andersen and JC Muhot.

The presence of actress Isabel Oli, to whom Beltrame reportedly first offered Cebuleña's hosting job, drew conclusions from appointed covering the event.

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Disclosures, surprises at Willie's party

By Marinel R. Cruz
Photos by Arnold Almacen

AT HIS 55TH birthday party held on Saturday at the Rizal Ballroom of Makati Shangri-La hotel, Willie Revillame disclosed how GMA 7 offered him a show while he was on indefinite leave from ABS-CBN.

"Sila (GMA) ang unang nag-offer sa akin. Sabi ko, 'Hindi ako puwede kasi may kontrata pa ako sa ABS-CBN.' Sabi nila, 'Hintayin mo kami.' Sabi ko, 'Sige, hintayin ko kayo.' Pero hindi ko alam kung kailan ako babalik. Kung kailan ako babalik, kung kailan ako magsisimula, hindi ko alam. Kasi nga, hindi ko alam kung kailan ako babalik sa ABS-CBN," he said.

"Sila (GMA) ang unang nag-offer sa akin. Sabi ko, 'Hindi ako puwede kasi may kontrata pa ako sa ABS-CBN.' Sabi nila, 'Hintayin mo kami.' Sabi ko, 'Sige, hintayin ko kayo.' Pero hindi ko alam kung kailan ako babalik.